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PAWS Act Coalition Celebrates Increased Congressional Funding for Grant Program to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Pets

Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 Provides \$2.5 Million for Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act Grant Program

WASHINGTON, DC (February 9, 2021) – The PAWS Act Coalition, a group of non-profit and for-profit organizations, lauded the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. For the second year in a row this Act provides funding for an important USDA grant program designed to enable more domestic violence shelters to become pet-friendly so that victims of domestic violence and their pets may seek safe shelter together. The \$2.5 million appropriated for 2021 represents a \$500,000 increase in funding, coming two years after bipartisan passage of the Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act as part of the 2019 Farm Bill.

“This funding increase by Congress is a significant step forward in the public-private collaboration to keep domestic violence survivors and their pets together as they escape abuse and heal,” said Nina Leigh Krueger, CEO and President of Purina, and a champion for the company’s Purple Leash Project in partnership with RedRover. “Purina is proud to be part of the Coalition’s efforts to support funding for this important life-saving program, as we continue working to keep pets and people together, even in times of crisis.”

The PAWS Act Coalition would like to thank the original co-sponsors of the Pet and Women Safety Act for their leadership and commitment to its passage, especially the lead sponsors Congresswoman Katherine Clark (D-MA-5), Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) and former Senator Dean Heller (R-NV). The Coalition is also particularly grateful to former Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) for spearheading the effort to pass the bill by including its language in the Farm Bill.

Domestic violence shelters across the U.S. will be eligible to apply online for grants in the coming months, and additional details about the application process will be forthcoming from the U.S. Department of Justice, which administers the grant program.

This continued funding follows the success of the FY 2020 Emergency Transitional Pet Shelter Housing and Assistance Grant Program, which awarded approximately \$2 million to six organizations in six states across the nation. Grants awarded will allow shelters to expand housing and supportive service resources for survivors of domestic violence, provide assistance including rent, pet deposits, and pet supplies to those seeking transitional housing with their pet, and so much more!

With the 2021 grant monies appropriated, more survivors of domestic violence and their pets will benefit from important programs. Future grants will provide emergency and transitional shelter and housing assistance or short-term shelter and housing assistance for domestic violence victims with pets, service animals, emotional support animals, or horses. Grants awarded may also be used for programs that provide support services designed to enable someone fleeing domestic violence to locate and secure safe housing with their pet, safe accommodations for their pet, or related services such as transportation and other assistance.

“The PAWS Act Coalition looks forward to working with the U.S. Department of Justice and other federal agencies to help more eligible organizations and programs access this critical funding,” said Steven Feldman, President of the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI). “We are excited to continue our efforts in raising awareness about this grant program, which will continue to save lives and enable more people to begin the process of healing with their beloved pets.”

Organizations in the PAWS Act coalition include:

- Purina (Nestlé Purina PetCare)
- Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI)
- Noah’s Animal House
- Pet Partners
- RedRover
- Urban Resource Institute (URI)

Two of these organizations, Noah’s Animal House and Urban Resource Institute, are part of the less than 20% of domestic violence shelters across the country that actively offer co-shelter services to keep both pets and their owners away from the dangers of domestic abuse. Together these two incredible organizations have saved approximately 2,300 pets from abusive conditions, so that no domestic violence survivor is forced to choose between staying in an abusive relationship and leaving their pet with their abuser.

Did you know?

- Up to 48% of domestic violence victims remain in abusive situations out of fear for their pets' safety.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, 4,774,000 women in the United States experience physical violence by an intimate partner every year.
- The majority of domestic violence situations include pets in the household, and 85% of women residing in domestic violence shelters reported a pet was harmed by their abuser.
- A growing body of science has demonstrated a link between domestic violence and animal cruelty. An outlet of emotional support for victims, the family pet often becomes a target for physical abuse.

“Since the launch of our groundbreaking People and Animals Living Safely (PALS) program in 2013, we have experienced tremendous growth in our programming and capacity to provide victims of domestic abuse with a safe place to live and heal alongside their pets,” said Nathaniel M. Fields, Chief Executive Officer of URI. “In sharing our experience and results running co-living shelters, there is significant interest in replicating this comprehensive, trauma-informed model. As dedicated members of the coalition, we are encouraged by the continuation of the PAWS Act grant program providing more resources to service providers around the country adopting pet-friendly options that empower survivors to lead the safest, fullest lives possible.”

“Since 2007, Noah’s Animal House has protected over 1,900 pets for more than 100,000 boarding nights, serving clients from over 30 states in the U.S, in addition to our home state of Nevada. Women drove thousands of miles from Florida, Oklahoma, Maine, Texas and others, driving past other women’s shelters in every state for one reason only, their pet had to be included in their escape plan,” said Staci Columbo Alonso, founder of Noah’s Animal House. “With the PAWS Act grant program entering its second year, we look forward to seeing more resources allocated to shelters and organizations across the country so that domestic violence survivors won’t have to travel far to locate safe shelter with their companion animals.”

“In support of the PAWS Act Coalition, Pet Partners grassroots advocates made their voices heard during every step of the legislative process: recruiting key co-sponsors in the Senate, supporting passage of the Senate Farm Bill, targeting members of the Conference Committee, and building support in communities across the country. Thanks to their continued efforts, thousands of constituent messages, tweets, and phone calls to Congress were made emphasizing the importance of these provisions. Pet Partners is grateful for their actions that will help pets and people remain together in traumatic situations – when they need each other most,” said Annie Peters, CEO of Pet Partners.

“RedRover has worked tirelessly for the last 14 years to ensure that domestic violence victims and their pets can escape abuse together by providing grants to make domestic violence shelters pet-friendly and providing funding to board the pets of survivors while they are in shelter,” said Nicole Forsyth, President and CEO of RedRover. “We believe pets are family and know how that special bond can help both a survivor and pet in their

journey to healing. We are proud to be part of the PAWS Act Coalition and the efforts to bring more safe havens to people and their pets.”

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About Purina

Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations. Purina manufactures some of the world’s most trusted and popular pet care products, including Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Fancy Feast and Tidy Cats. Our more than 8,000 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 49 million dogs and 66 million cats every year. More than 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

Purina promotes responsible pet care through our scientific research, our products and our support for pet-related organizations. Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than \$150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive.

Purina is part of Nestlé, a global leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness. For more information, visit purina.com or [subscribe here](#) to get the latest Purina news.

About Pet Partners

Pet Partners is the national leader in demonstrating and promoting the health and wellness benefits of animal-assisted therapy, activities, and education. Since the organization’s inception in 1977, the science proving these benefits has become indisputable. With more than 10,000 registered teams making more than 3 million visits annually, Pet Partners serves as the nation’s most diverse and respected nonprofit registering handlers of multiple species as volunteer teams. Pet Partners teams visit with patients in recovery, people with intellectual disabilities, seniors living with Alzheimer’s, students, veterans with PTSD, people who have experienced crisis events, and those approaching end of life, with the goal of improving human health and well-being through the human-animal bond. With the release of its *Standards of Practice for Animal-Assisted Interventions* and international expansion, Pet Partners is globally recognized as the industry gold standard. For more information on Pet Partners, visit www.petpartners.org.

About Urban Resource Institute

Urban Resource Institute (URI) helps transform the lives of domestic violence survivors and homeless families, with a focus on communities of color and other vulnerable populations, to end cycles of violence, poverty, and trauma. As the largest provider of domestic violence shelter services in the US and a leading provider of homeless services, URI’s innovative programs impact more than 40,000 individuals annually through prevention, intervention, education, and direct services in both residential and non-residential settings. With a trauma-informed approach to program development and

service delivery, URI is uniquely equipped to provide solutions to the challenges affecting New York City's most vulnerable populations while influencing service delivery in other parts of the U.S. and the world. For more information, please visit www.urinyc.org.

About Noah's Animal House

Noah's Animal House was the first stand-alone full service pet boarding facility in the country built on the grounds of and in partnership with The Shade Tree Shelter in 2007 to provide safety, shelter and support for the pets of the clients of the shelter. A second location serving up to 36 animals in Reno, Nevada opened February 2018 in partnership with the Domestic Violence Resource Center. In a national survey, 71 percent of women seeking safety in a domestic violence shelter reported pet abuse in their home and more than 25 percent delayed leaving because they did not have an escape plan that could include their pets. To learn more about Noah's Animal House, visit <http://www.noahsanimalhouse.org>.

About RedRover

Since 1987, RedRover has focused on bringing animals out of crisis and strengthening the human-animal bond through emergency sheltering, disaster relief services, financial assistance, and education. Since 2007, RedRover has given 978 Safe Escape grants throughout the United States, totaling more than \$688,000. These grants have provided 40,550 safe nights of boarding to 1,378 pets. Since the Safe Housing program's inception in 2012, RedRover has awarded 138 grants in 41 states, totaling more than \$1.5 million. Additionally, the Safe Housing grants have created the first pet-friendly domestic violence shelters in nine states. For the fifth consecutive year, RedRover has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. To learn how RedRover is creating a more compassionate world, visit RedRover.org.

About HABRI

HABRI is a not-for-profit organization that maintains the world's largest online library of human-animal bond research and information; funds innovative research projects to scientifically document the health benefits of companion animals; and informs the public about human-animal bond research and the beneficial role of companion animals in society. For more information, please visit <http://www.habri.org>.