



June 22, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
PO Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Abbott,

I write on behalf of the El Paso County Commissioners Court to respectfully request that enforcement of Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 828, regarding dog and cat sterilization, be suspended pursuant to Chapter 418.016 of the Government Code for the duration of the COVID-19 declared disaster. We join the City of El Paso, which made this request of your office in May, and support the multiple local government and nonprofit animal welfare offices and veterinarians across Texas who also call for temporary suspension of Chapter 828 so that they may still provide live outcomes for animals during the ongoing pandemic.

Chapter 828 requires that shelters, before they release a dog or cat, either sterilize the animal or make the new owners agree to sterilize within 30 days.

Consistent with National Animal Care and Control Association recommendations,¹ the City and County of El Paso are actively supporting placing pets in foster care. Many foster parents end up wanting to adopt their pets. Unfortunately, compliance with Chapter 828 makes this impossible. Many veterinary hospitals, including those El Paso County contracts with, have stopped elective surgeries, leaving shelters without sterilization services.

To ensure more animals are given loving homes, we implore you to temporarily suspend Chapter 828 and allow animal welfare organizations to follow up on sterilizations after the pandemic has passed.

Thank you in advance for your serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Ricardo A. Samaniego
El Paso County Judge

¹ See NACA Statement on Releasing Unaltered Pets from Animal Shelters During the COVID-19 Pandemic, *available at* <https://www.nacanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.Releasing-Unaltered-Pets-from-Animal-Shelters-During-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>.