



October 3, 2023

Robert Garcia, Esq.
HSSA Board of Directors, Chairperson
Farhang & Medcoff
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Tucson, Arizona 85701
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Dear Mr. Garcia,

We write this letter with a sense of deep concern and urgency around the fate of and lack of transparency surrounding the transfer of hundreds of small animals from San Diego Humane Society to the Humane Society of Southern Arizona (HSSA) on August 7th. The outcome of at least 250 of these animals remains in question and is unnecessarily shrouded in mystery after they were transferred to an unnamed rescue group.

With the recent news published by Arizona Public Media (AZPM), a lifesaving outcome of these animals seems increasingly unlikely, and we encourage you and the HSSA Board to investigate this tragic incident as fully as you can. Transparency is the cornerstone of our work in animal welfare and essential to maintaining the trust of our communities. It fosters accountability and demonstrates that our actions are in the best interest of the animals and people we serve. We strongly assert that transparency is not an option we choose; instead, it is an absolute necessity. The lack of accountability by HSSA's executives undermines the essence of what our organizations stand for and the principles we uphold. Your recent actions to take San Diego Humane Society's concerns seriously and act by holding your executive staff to account is a good start for much needed accountability.

It is essential for HSSA to provide a full and transparent account of the outcomes of the 250 animals that remain unaccounted for. We also call on HSSA to review their internal procedures to ensure that any organization transferring animals in the future will have assurance of lifesaving outcomes and accountability on each and every one of their animals.

The implications of this lack of transparency are far-reaching and extend beyond this single incident and the outcome of these animals. It raises questions about the credibility and viability of future animal transfers between shelters and rescue groups that are already declining as shelters struggle to cope with the challenges they are facing. This breach in commonly held lifesaving protocols jeopardizes the bonds of trust between organizations as well as the communities we serve.

As a matter of fact, the Association for Animal Welfare Advancement's Transport Best Practices states: *"The way agencies conduct themselves, regardless of their role in a transport program, will impact credibility and either undermine or garner trust in the organization's ability to be an effective transport partner. Agency conduct and maintaining high standards will build confidence in the community, among partners, and with regulatory agencies."* The way HSSA is conducting itself does not garner credibility or confidence. In fact, it damages both.

SAN DIEGO HUMANE SOCIETY

5500 Gaines St., San Diego, CA 92110

Campus locations in El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside, Ramona and San Diego

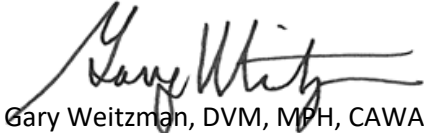
SDHUMANE.ORG | 619-299-7012

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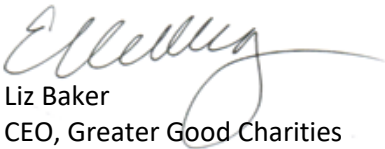
It is our collective responsibility to not only ensure that animals receive the care and protection they deserve, but also that we do so in a way that engenders the public's trust in our ability to do so. To prevent further harm to our commitment to the animals and transparency, we implore you to act swiftly to rectify this situation and respond to San Diego Humane Society's reasonable request for definitive information about their animals.

We are relieved that you and your board recently acted on your executives' lack of accountability, and we support you wholly in that. We also understand that your staff and volunteers may also be suffering and would welcome any request for assistance from us that you feel is helpful. We encourage you to investigate this terrible incident as thoroughly as you can. We await your response, which we trust will reflect your dedication to the well-being of animals and the highest standards of ethical conduct. The animals and people we serve, as well as the credibility of the entire animal welfare community deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



Gary Weitzman, DVM, MPH, CAWA
President and CEO, San Diego Humane Society



Liz Baker
CEO, Greater Good Charities



Matt Bershadker
President and CEO, ASPCA



Cathy Bissell
Founder, Bissell Pet Foundation



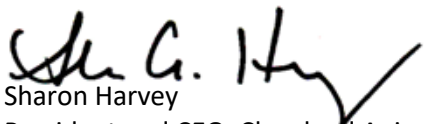
Kitty Block
President and CEO, The Humane Society of the United States



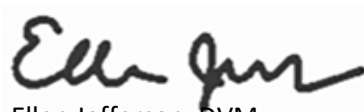
Julie Castle
CEO, Best Friends Animal Society



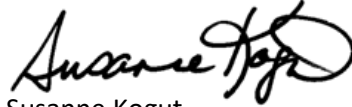
Sharon Harmon, CAWA
President and CEO, Oregon Humane Society



Sharon Harvey
President and CEO, Cleveland Animal Protection Society



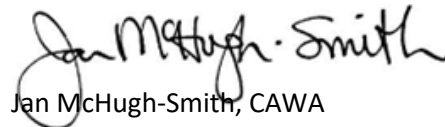
Ellen Jefferson, DVM
President and CEO, Human Animal Support Services



Susanne Kogut
President, Petco Love



Lisa LaFontaine
President and CEO, Humane Rescue Alliance



Jan McHugh-Smith, CAWA
CEO, Boulder Humane Society



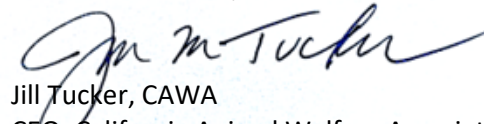
Jerrica Owen, CAWA
Executive Director, National Animal Care and Control Assoc.



Apryl Steele, DVM, CAWA
President and CEO, Dumb Friends League



Jim Tedford, CAWA,
President and CEO, Assoc. for Animal Welfare Advancement



Jill Tucker, CAWA
CEO, California Animal Welfare Association