

Support CO HB26-1229 "Supporting the Human-Animal Bond"

AlignCare HEALTH

Prime Sponsors: Reps. Rick Taggart & Lisa Feret; Sens. Judy Amabile & Janice Rich



What This Bill Does

This bill codifies the Human-Animal Bond in Colorado statute as a Social Determinant of Health. It formally recognizes the relationship between individuals and their pet animals as a life-enhancing resource that can influence human health outcomes and quality of life.

Current Law

Colorado law currently defines Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) as "life-enhancing resources, such as food, housing, economic and social relationships, transportation, education, and health care, whose distribution across populations effectively determines the length and quality of life."

Proposed Definition

"Human-Animal Bond" (HAB) means the mutually beneficial relationship between an individual and a pet animal within the individual's care and custody.

This definition aligns with Colorado's existing framework for recognizing life-enhancing resources that influence health outcomes.

Why This Bill Matters

Pets play an important and measurable role in public health and human health outcomes.

A growing body of research links the Human-Animal Bond to improved mental health, reduced social isolation, increased physical activity, better routine adherence, and stronger social connection. Studies also associate living with and caring for a pet animal with improved mobility, lower fall risk, and certain cardiovascular health benefits.

By influencing daily behaviors, stability, and social support, pets can shape health outcomes, care engagement, and overall wellbeing.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will this bill cost taxpayers money?

No. The bill does not create new programs, require spending, mandate services, or create future fiscal obligations. This bill does not have a fiscal note.

How could this be used in practice?

Recognizing the role of the Human-Animal Bond in human health outcomes allows health systems, public health agencies, and partners to consider pet-related factors within existing Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and Health-Related Social Needs (HRSNs) frameworks.

Why is this relevant to Colorado?

Two-thirds of Colorado households have pets, meaning pet-related factors already intersect with healthcare access, stability, and wellbeing for many residents. Colorado has long prioritized prevention, health equity, and whole-person care, including recognition of nonmedical factors such as housing, transportation, and caregiving responsibilities.

As the state and health systems focus on cost containment and efficient use of limited resources, it is increasingly important to recognize factors that influence care utilization, adherence, and health stability. Acknowledging the Human-Animal Bond supports more informed, prevention-oriented approaches without creating new programs or costs.

Why should human health systems consider pets at all?

Pets can support mental health, physical activity, and social stability. Pet-related barriers can also delay care, affect treatment adherence, and complicate recovery or discharge planning. When these factors influence health behaviors, healthcare access, utilization, and stability, they become relevant to health system outcomes and overall cost of care.

For more information or for a list of supporters:

Contact Anna Stout, Executive Director of AlignCare Health, at astout@aligncarehealth.org or 970-433-2897

