

Margaret A. Cunzio

Minority Leader, Legislator, 3rd District
Co-Chair, Committee on Rules



Committee Assignments:
Appointments
Legislation
Public Safety & Veterans
Seniors & Youth

From: Margaret Cunzio, Legislator, District 3

Date: July 28, 2026

Re: Strengthening and potentially expanding the Westchester County Dog Tethering Law

Purpose and Intent

The purpose of this proposed amendment is to strengthen Westchester County's existing dog tethering law by increasing its deterrent effect and enhancing protections for animals subjected to cruel or unlawful tethering.

Justification

Westchester County's existing tethering law is among the strongest in New York State; however, Nassau County has recently adopted two additional enforcement provisions that would further advance the County's objective of preventing animal cruelty. Reclassifying an initial violation as a misdemeanor would provide a more meaningful deterrent to unlawful tethering, while authorizing judicial forfeiture of an animal upon conviction would enable courts, where appropriate, to protect animals from continued mistreatment. These targeted amendments would enhance enforcement without altering the substantive standards already established under Westchester law.

Proposed Provisions

1. Reclassify a First Offense as a Misdemeanor.
2. Authorize Judicial Forfeiture of the Animal.
3. Maintain Existing Substantive Tethering Standards.
4. Increase Deterrence and Enhance Animal Protection.

Legal Authority

TBD

Fiscal Impact

TBD

Conclusion

These limited amendments would build upon an already comprehensive tethering law by enhancing its deterrent effect and providing additional safeguards for vulnerable animals. Adoption of these provisions would reaffirm Westchester County's longstanding commitment to the humane treatment and protection of dogs.