

Pet-Inclusive Housing Initiative

PRESENTED BY

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RESEARCH BRIEF

Pet Policy Transparency Is a Major Barrier for California Renters

New data show widespread barriers, avoidable financial harm, and overwhelming support for a simple, common-sense policy solution



THE PROBLEM: Barriers Are Widespread and Often Not Disclosed Upfront

Finding rental housing in California is already challenging. For renters with pets, the process is significantly more difficult due to unclear, inconsistent, and often undisclosed pet policies.

82%

82% of renters encountered at least one pet-related restriction or fee during their housing search.

These barriers include:

- ▶ Breed and size restrictions
- ▶ Limits on the number of pets
- ▶ Monthly pet rent
- ▶ Non-refundable fees and deposits

Despite how common these requirements are, they are often **not clearly disclosed in rental listings before renters apply**, forcing renters to spend time and money just to obtain basic information.

74%

Nearly three-quarters of renters (74%) say pet-friendly housing is difficult to find in California.

Even at the most basic level, transparency is inconsistent:

19%

Nearly 1 in 5 renters (19%) reported difficulty determining whether pets were allowed before contacting a property.

THE CONSEQUENCES: Lack of Upfront Information Leads to Avoidable Harm

72%

72% of renters reported that unclear or incomplete pet policy information led to negative outcomes during their housing search.

When key information is not available upfront, renters are forced into an inefficient and costly process.

These impacts include:

- ▶ Spending additional time searching for housing
- ▶ Contacting multiple properties to confirm basic eligibility
- ▶ Delays in securing housing
- ▶ Settling for housing that does not meet their needs

AVOIDABLE FINANCIAL COSTS ARE COMMON

51%

51% of renters paid an application fee before fully understanding a property's pet policy.

In many cases, renters are paying fees **before they have the information needed to determine whether they are even eligible for the unit.**

"Many listings didn't mention breed restrictions or extra fees, causing me to pay application fees before realizing my pet wasn't allowed. It wasted a lot of my time and money."

"Many places listed as 'pet friendly' had hidden breed or weight restrictions that weren't disclosed until I called—or even after I applied."

THE SOLUTION: Ensure Pet Policies Are Disclosed Before Renters Apply

These challenges are not inherent to the housing market—they result from inconsistent and incomplete information.

A straightforward policy can address this issue:

Require rental listings to clearly disclose pet policies upfront, before a renter applies, including:

- ▶ Whether pets are allowed
- ▶ Applicable fees and deposits
- ▶ Breed, size, or number restrictions

Ensuring this information is available **prior to application** would:

- ▶ Prevent renters from paying fees for units they cannot qualify for
- ▶ Reduce unnecessary applications and administrative burden
- ▶ Improve efficiency for both renters and housing providers
- ▶ Increase transparency and fairness in the rental market

Strong Public Support for Action

96% 96% of renters support requiring rental listings to clearly disclose pet policies before applying.

This overwhelming level of support reflects a clear consensus: Renters want access to complete, accurate information **before they apply**.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR CALIFORNIA

Improving pet policy transparency is a **practical, low-burden consumer protection measure** that can:

- ▶ Reduce avoidable financial strain on renters
- ▶ Improve housing search efficiency
- ▶ Support better housing outcomes for pet-owning households
- ▶ Increase trust and transparency in the rental market

Importantly, this approach:

- ▶ Does **not** require landlords to allow pets
- ▶ Does **not** restrict property management practices
- ▶ Simply ensures that renters have the information they need to make informed decisions

CONCLUSION

Pet policy transparency is a solvable issue with meaningful impacts on housing access, cost, and efficiency.

- ▶ Barriers are widespread
- ▶ Lack of upfront information causes real harm
- ▶ Financial costs are often avoidable
- ▶ Renters overwhelmingly support a solution

Requiring clear disclosure of pet policies before renters apply is a simple, common-sense step that can reduce costs, improve efficiency, and support better housing outcomes across California.

METHODOLOGY

Findings are based on a March 2026 survey of over 1,100 California renters who recently searched for housing. Responses were cleaned to remove low-quality data and to include respondents who reached key survey questions, including those who did not complete the full survey. Results reflect renters' reported experiences with pet-related housing policies during their search.

