

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 997 (Senator Simonaire)
Judicial Proceedings

Civil Actions - Tortious Injury to or Death of Pet - Compensatory Damages
(Buddy's Law)

This bill increases, from \$10,000 to \$25,000, the maximum amount of compensatory damages that may be awarded to the owner of a pet from a person who tortiously causes an injury to or the death of the pet under specified circumstances.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances or operations, as discussed below.

Local Effect: None. The bill does not materially affect local finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: A person who tortiously causes an injury to or the death of a pet while acting individually or through an animal under the person's ownership, direction, or control is liable to the owner of the pet for up to \$10,000 in compensatory damages.

"Pet" means a domesticated animal and does not include livestock. "Compensatory damages" mean (1) the reasonable and necessary cost of veterinary care for a pet that was injured and (2) in a case involving the death of a pet, the fair market value of the pet before death and the reasonable and necessary cost of veterinary care.

State Fiscal Effect: The State assesses a 2% tax on gross or renewal insurance premiums. While the bill increases the cap on damages for tortious injury to or tortious death of a pet, the bill is likely to apply to a small pool of cases. Accordingly, any additional premium tax revenues that may accrue due to the bill are not expected to materially affect State finances.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: HB 992 (Delegates Kipke and Chisholm) - Judiciary.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 3, 2020
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