

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Enrolled - Revised

Senate Bill 159

(Senator Waldstreicher, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Environment and Transportation

Local Government - Humane Society and Animal Control Officers - Education
and Training Requirements

This bill requires a new officer of a humane society or animal control to satisfactorily complete at least 80 hours of training for animal care and control professionals – that is approved by the appropriate unit of a county or municipality – within the first 12 months of employment. The bill also requires an officer of a humane society or animal control to satisfactorily complete at least 6 hours of continuing education approved by the appropriate unit of a county or municipality every year.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Local government expenditures may increase relatively minimally in some jurisdictions, as discussed below. Local revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The training for new officers must include instruction on (1) animal cruelty investigations; (2) the association between animal abuse and the abuse of the elderly or domestic violence, as defined in § 4-701 of the Family Law Article; (3) the use of legal resources, as specified; (4) lawful searches and seizures; (5) professionalism and ethical standards; (6) evidence collection and the chain of custody; (7) preparation for civil and criminal proceedings, including basic trial principles and due process protections; (8) conflict resolution and officer safety, including physical and mental health; and

(9) animal diseases and zoonosis. The unit of the county or municipality that approves the training may require other additional training. The continuing education must include instruction on the current laws applicable to officers.

Current Law: State law does not currently establish training requirements or other qualifications for humane society officers or animal control officers.

Local Expenditures: Expenditures may increase relatively minimally in certain local jurisdictions to the extent (1) a jurisdiction's officers do not already undergo training and continued education that meet the requirements of the bill and (2) the jurisdiction pays for the training required under the bill. Certain jurisdictions that responded to requests for information indicate that their animal control officers currently undergo training and continuing education.

Online and in-person training programs of at least 80 hours have been offered by organizations such as the National Animal Care and Control Association and the East Coast Animal Control Academy.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 814 of 2020, a similar bill, received a hearing in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, but no further action was taken. Its cross file, HB 1537, received a hearing in the House Environment and Transportation Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: HB 281 (Delegate Chang) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Montgomery and Prince George's counties; Maryland Association of Counties; City of Bowie; Maryland Municipal League; National Animal Care and Control Association; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 18, 2021
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