



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 547 – Health - Maryland Children's Service Animal Program - Establishment

SPONSOR: Delegate Barron

HEARING DATE: February 26, 2020

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 547**, which creates the Maryland Children's Service Animal Program in the Maryland Department of Health to serve the needs of children with a history of trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder. The program will teach children to partner with a service or support dog or to interact with therapy horses.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events occurring before age 18. ACEs include all types of abuse and neglect as well as parental mental illness, substance use, divorce, incarceration, and domestic violence. ACEs significantly increase the variety of negative outcomes in adulthood. It is estimated that approximately 12.5% of American children have experienced at least four Adverse Childhood events.¹ In Maryland, that equates to approximately 167,294 children statewide and 25,241 children in Prince George's County. Animal therapy is promising to deal with short-term issues resulting from trauma.²

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 547** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

¹ ACEs in young children involved in the child welfare system. Retrieved from <http://www.flcourts.org/core/fileparse.php/517/urlt/ACEsInYoungChildrenInvolveInTheChildWelfareSystem.pdf> (opens in new window); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). About the CDC-Kaiser ACE study: Data and statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>.

² Nimer J., Lundahl B. (2007). Animal-assisted therapy: a meta-analysis. *Anthrozoös* 20, 225–238. 10.2752/089279307X224773