

Senate Bill 127 Testimony submitted by Val Lynch, Executive Director, Senior Dog Sanctuary of Maryland Inc, SUPPORTS with amendments, Article – Transportation, Section 21-1004.1, Annotated Code of Maryland (2012 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

Current law allows public safety employees of the State or local governing body, animal control officers, officers of a society or association incorporated under the laws of this State for the prevention of cruelty to animals, authorized to make arrests under the provisions of section 10-609 of the Criminal Law Article, or a volunteer or professional of a fire and rescue service to remove an animal in distress from a vehicle.

This amendment would allow anyone who sees a cat or dog in distress in a locked vehicle to be protected from being held liable for any damages directly resulting from actions taken as a Good Samaritan if they use force to remove an animal in distress as long as they:

1. Contact a law enforcement agency, fire department, or 911 specialist before using force.
2. Leave written notice in the vehicle with
 - Their name and contact information
 - The reason they entered the vehicle
 - Information about who was contacted (under 1)
3. Stay with the animal in the vicinity of the vehicle until the arrival of the law enforcement or fire department personnel.

This does not extend to removal of a dog used by the State or a local governing body for police work while the dog is on duty, or to a cat or dog in the custody of an animal control officer.

Need for this legislation:

1. An animal left in a locked vehicle can incur brain damage or die of heatstroke within 15 minutes.
2. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, temperatures in a car can increase 20 degrees in 10 minutes, 30 degrees in 20 minutes, and 40 degrees in 60 minutes. So, if it is 70 degrees outside, the inside of a vehicle can be 100 degrees in 20 minutes.
3. When it is cold, the temperature in a vehicle quickly reaches the outside temperature, and animals can perish from hypothermia.
4. Caretakers are often uninformed of the risk they create for their animals by leaving them locked in a very hot or extremely cold vehicle. What may begin as a short pit stop can turn into an extended absence and a dangerous situation for the animal.
5. Fear of liability may inhibit remedial action when an animal is in acute distress. This legislation mitigates that concern.
6. Consider this: Would you not want YOUR cat or dog be rescued by forcible entry if in acute distress.

Respectfully submitted,



Val Lynch

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