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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SENATE BILL 127 Vehicle Laws – Cats and Dogs Left Unattended – Authorized Removal

DATE: January 21 , 2020

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

SUMMARY OF BILL: This bill removes restrictions on the general public from using reasonable force to remove a cat or dog left unattended in a standing or parked motor vehicle where it endangers the animal's health or safety.

EXPLANATION: An individual may use reasonable force if:

1. It's reasonable to believe that the cat or dog is in imminent danger.
2. They contact a law enforcement agency, fire dept. or 9-1-1 prior to using force to remove the animal.
3. Leave written notice in the vehicle containing:
 - a. Their name and contact information
 - b. The reason they entered the vehicle
 - c. The name of the law enforcement agency, fire department, or 9-1-1 specialist that has been contacted.

An individual must remain with the cat or dog in a safe location near the vehicle until law enforcement, or the fire department arrives.

CURRENT LAW: Current law allows the following individuals to use reasonable force to remove a cat or dog for a locked motor vehicle when the health and safety of the animal is endangered.

1. Law enforcement officer
2. Public safety employee
3. Animal control officer
4. Officer of a society or association for the prevention of cruelty to animals, who is authorized to make arrests under provisions of the Criminal Law Article.
5. A volunteer or professional of a fire and rescue service