



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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**SB 872**

**DATE: March 5, 2024**

**SPONSOR: Senator Kramer**

**ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (sara.morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)**

**POSITION: SUPPORT (Montgomery County Office of Animal Services)**

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### **Criminal Law - Animal Abuse or Neglect - Penalties**

Senate Bill 872 would amend §10-604 when a violation of the section leads to the death or euthanasia of animals subjected to violations of this section. My name is Dr. Gregory Lawrence and I have served as the Chief Veterinarian for The Montgomery County Office of Animal Services since 2014. In my 20 years of experience as a veterinarian, I have seen all degrees of animal cruelty.

While many of these cases do not reach the legal requirements of aggravated cruelty, the pain and suffering inflicted on the animal victims can be just as severe. Starvation cases are a perfect example of this. These animals experience extreme suffering over an extended period and face a slow, painful death without intervention. Because there is no definitive testing for starvation, I must first rule out any medical cause for the emaciation. Once I have documented that there is no medical cause that can be identified, I provide proper nutrition and document that the animal not only willingly eats when food is offered but gains weight as well. These animals must be re-alimented in a very structured manner to avoid a life-threatening cardiac failure complication that can occur in the most extreme cases.

Another common situation I have encountered is the failure to provide veterinary care, proper space, or proper air. The lack of the most basic veterinary care can lead to a minor problem like a flea infestation or bacterial infection to fester and lead to easily avoided life threatening complications. Unsanitary conditions and failure to provide proper space/air can lead to ammonia levels high enough to be irritating to the respiratory mucosa and mucous membranes. This would cause pain and suffering in any animal trapped in the environment and could be fatal to an animal with a cardiac or respiratory condition. Unfortunately, these cases are entirely too common in the State.

I support Senate Bill 872 and would urge that the Committee adopt a favorable report.