



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

February 5, 2026

To: House Judiciary Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Criminal Law – Non-domesticated Animal Prohibitions – Alterations– HB 53 -Support

Chair Bartlett, Vice - Chair Davis, members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the House Judiciary Committee vote favorably for Criminal Law – Non-domesticated Animal Prohibitions – Alterations – HB 53.

This bill would expand the list of wild animals prohibited for private ownership in Maryland to include Zebras, Kangaroos, Wallaroos, and Wallabies. It would alter a certain exception to the prohibition against importing, offering for sale, trading, bartering, possessing, breeding, or exchanging certain live, non-domesticated animals and repealing a certain other exception; prohibiting certain live non-domesticated animals from being imported, offered for sale, traded, bartered, possessed, bred, or exchanged on or after a certain date, subject to a certain exception; and generally relating to the prohibition against the importation, sale, trade, barter, possession, breeding, or exchange of certain non-domesticated animals.

Currently, Maryland law already prohibits private ownership of a list of wild animals that includes bears, nonhuman primates, wild cats, and certain venomous snakes. HB 53 would simply add zebras, kangaroos, wallabies, and walleroos to that list to address public safety and animal welfare concerns. This is an issue of protecting the public from injury or even death from an encounter with these wild animals.

Zebras have repeatedly escaped from private owners and licensed exhibitors and breeders, including in Maryland, requiring response from law enforcement and expenditure of public resources. Kangaroos and wallabies (part of a category of animals known as macropods), are readily available for sale online and escapes of these animals are on the rise.

In Upper Marlboro, Maryland, several zebras escaped from a farm owned by a USDA-licensed breeder in 2021. One was found dead in a snare trap but it took four months to capture all of the zebras, who roamed through residential neighborhoods in Upper Marlboro. Zebras are strong, muscular animals with unpredictable behavior, including biting and kicking that can cause serious internal injuries. Kangaroos can exceed 6 feet in height and weigh up to 200 lbs. Wallabies can reach 3 feet tall and weigh 30 - 60 lbs. Both species can inflict serious injuries through powerful kicks and sharp claws.

HB 53 would continue to allow licensed and regulated individuals and facilities to own these animals. Expanding this law to include zebras and macropods will help law enforcement and protect communities. The Maryland Legislature has already banned private ownership of many wild animals in the interest of protecting the public. This bill would simply add these animals to MD Code 10-621.

Zebras, Kangaroos, Wallabies, and Walleroos should not be pets!

In closing, I would like to thank Delegate Lehman for her sponsorship of HB 53 and ask the committee for a favorable report.