

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1478  
Judiciary

(Delegate Cardin, *et al.*)

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**Baltimore County - Division of Animal Control - Treatment of Unclaimed Dogs or Cats**

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This bill requires the Baltimore County Department of Health, Division of Animal Control to make it a priority to place unclaimed dogs or cats in a suitable home; and establish a program of volunteers to assist in the placing of dogs and cats in suitable homes and other functions determined by the Division of Animal Control.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Baltimore County expenditures increase by \$598,200 in FY 2014 and by \$262,700 in FY 2018, which reflects the cost of hiring additional staff in the Division of Animal Control and one-time construction costs. County revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** An animal control unit must dispose of an unclaimed dog or cat by (1) placing the animal in a suitable home; (2) retaining the animal in the animal control unit; or (3) humanely destroying the animal.

A domestic animal that is impounded by an animal control unit may not be sold, placed, or destroyed until the animal has been carefully inspected for a tag, tattoo, or other identification to ascertain the owner and (1) 72 hours have elapsed after notice has been given to the owner; (2) if the owner cannot be notified, 72 hours have elapsed after the animal is impounded; (3) the animal is seriously diseased or severely injured; or (4) the animal is under three months of age.

An owner who retrieves an animal from an animal control unit must pay all fees, costs, and expenses incurred by the animal control unit. The necessary expenses for food and attention given to an animal may be collected from the owner, and the animal is not exempt from levy and sale on execution of a judgment for the expenses. A new owner with whom an animal is placed may be charged an adoption fee, under specified conditions.

A person who violates these provisions is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to a fine of up to \$500.

An animal control unit is defined as the local organization or government unit that a county or municipal government designates to house, care for, and control domestic animals of unknown ownership.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Baltimore County expenditures will increase by \$598,200 in fiscal 2014, in order to establish a program of volunteers to assist in placing unclaimed dogs and cats in suitable homes. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring four individuals to administer the volunteer program including:

- one local area network administrator to support the computer automation necessary to effectively track and manage adoptions and volunteers;
- one veterinarian technician to assist with the care and treatment of unhealthy animals, especially cats, that are brought into the shelter so they can be adopted;
- one adoption coordinator to photograph adoptable pets, screen adopters, field phone calls and answer Internet inquiries from potential adopters, and monitor for rabies vaccinations and spaying/neutering that are mandatory or encouraged for adopted pets; and
- one volunteer coordinator for Internet monitoring and updating, recruitment, screening, assigning, scheduling, and supervision of volunteers.

The estimate includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses and one-time construction costs for additional space so that sick animals can be more effectively isolated from healthy animals and can thereby be brought back to an adoptable state. Additionally, the county advises that adoption rooms are needed where potential adopters and pets can get acquainted in order to help learn whether they are a good match. The information used in calculating the estimate is shown below.

	<u>FY 2014</u>	<u>FY 2018</u>
Position(s)	4	4
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$158,932	\$252,706
Construction of Additional Space for Adoptions	400,000	0
Operating Expenses	<u>39,240</u>	<u>10,002</u>
<b>Total County Expenditures</b>	<b>\$598,172</b>	<b>\$262,708</b>

### Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** HB 1021 of 2012 received an unfavorable report from the House Judiciary Committee.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Baltimore County, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 19, 2013  
mm/hlb

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