

HOUSE BILL 912

L6, E1, M4

6lr1948

CF 6lr2129

By: Delegates Guyton, Palakovich Carr, Ruth, and Terrasa

Introduced and read first time: February 5, 2026

Assigned to: Environment and Transportation

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

Local Government – Trap–Neuter–Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions (Ash’s Law)

5 FOR the purpose of establishing that a certain prohibition against abandoning an animal
6 does not apply to a person who is providing care to a community cat under a certain
7 trap-neuter-return policy; establishing that a local law that establishes a
8 trap-neuter-return policy is subject to certain requirements and restrictions; and
9 generally relating to trap-neuter-return policies for community cats.

10 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
11 Article – Criminal Law
12 Section 10–612
13 Annotated Code of Maryland
14 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

15 BY adding to
16 Article – Local Government
17 Section 1–1321
18 Annotated Code of Maryland
19 (2013 Volume and 2025 Supplement)

20 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
21 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Criminal Law

23 10-612.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



4 **(B)** A person who owns, possesses, or has custody of a domestic animal may not
5 drop or leave the animal on a road, in a public place, or on private property with the intent
6 to abandon the animal.

7 [(b)] (c) A person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and on
8 conviction is subject to a fine not exceeding \$100.

Article – Local Government

10 1-1321.

11 (A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
12 INDICATED.

(II) "COMMUNITY CAT" INCLUDES A FERAL CAT.

24 (4) "EARTIP" MEANS A PROCEDURE THAT:

25 (I) REMOVES THE DISTAL ONE-QUARTER OF THE LEFT EAR OF
26 A COMMUNITY CAT.

27 (II) IS PERFORMED USING ANESTHESIA UNDER THE
28 SUPERVISION OF A LICENSED VETERINARIAN; AND

29 (III) IS DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY A COMMUNITY CAT AS BEING
30 STERILIZED AND VACCINATED FOR RABIES

4 (II) "TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN" INCLUDES PROVIDING CARE TO
5 A COMMUNITY CAT.

6 (B) THIS SECTION APPLIES TO ALL COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES.

7 (C) A LOCAL LAW THAT ESTABLISHES A TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN POLICY;

10 (2) SHALL AUTHORIZE THE TRAPPING OF A COMMUNITY CAT TO
11 STERILIZE, VACCINATE FOR RABIES, AND EARTIP THE COMMUNITY CAT IN
12 ACCORDANCE WITH FEDERAL OR STATE LAW;

(I) CARRYING OUT A TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN POLICY; OR

17 (II) RETURNING AN EARTIPPED CAT TO THE LOCATION WHERE
18 THE CAT WAS ORIGINALLY TRAPPED;

(4) UNLESS VETERINARY CARE IS REQUIRED, SHALL REQUIRE THAT:

20 (I) AN EARTIPPED CAT THAT IS RECEIVED BY A LOCAL SHELTER
21 BE RETURNED TO THE LOCATION WHERE THE CAT WAS ORIGINALLY TRAPPED; AND

22 (II) AN EARTIPPED CAT THAT IS TRAPPED BE RETURNED
23 ON-SITE; AND

26 (D) THIS SECTION SUPERSEDES AND PREEMPTS ANY LAW, ORDINANCE,
27 POLICY, OR REGULATION OF ANY LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODY, AND ANY POLICY OR
28 RULE OF ANY PERSON OR CORPORATION, THAT PROHIBITS OR RESTRICTS THE
29 PRACTICE OF TRAP-NEUTER-RETURN.

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1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
2 October 1, 2026.