

SENATE BILL 360

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6lr2682
CF HB 563

By: ~~Senator Henson~~ Senators Henson, Smith, Waldstreicher, West, McKay, Love,
and Charles

Introduced and read first time: January 23, 2026

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: February 20, 2026

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Criminal Law – Emergency Response Animal – Prohibited Actions Against**

3 FOR the purpose of repealing the prohibition against intentionally inflicting bodily harm,
4 permanent disability, or death on an animal owned or used by a law enforcement
5 unit; prohibiting a person from harassing, interfering with, injuring, or killing or
6 causing serious physical injury to an emergency response animal; and generally
7 relating to law enforcement animals.

8 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
9 Article – Criminal Law
10 Section 10–606
11 Annotated Code of Maryland
12 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

13 BY adding to
14 Article – Criminal Law
15 Section 10–606.1
16 Annotated Code of Maryland
17 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

20 **Article – Criminal Law**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 10-606.

2 (a) (1) In this section, “sexual contact with an animal” means any act:

3 (i) involving:

4 1. a person touching the sex organ or anus of an animal;

5 2. contact between:

6 A. the sex organ or anus of a person and the mouth, sex
7 organ, or anus of an animal; or

8 B. the sex organ or anus of an animal, and the mouth, sex
9 organ, or anus of a person; or

10 3. insertion of:

11 A. any part of the body of a person into the opening of the
12 vagina or anus of an animal;

13 B. any part of an animal’s body into the opening of the vagina
14 or anus of a person; or

15 C. any object into the opening of the vagina or anus of an
16 animal; and

17 (ii) committed for the purpose of sexual arousal, sexual gratification,
18 abuse, or financial gain.

19 (2) “Sexual contact with an animal” does not include:

20 (i) an accepted veterinary practice;

21 (ii) artificial insemination of an animal for reproductive purposes;

22 (iii) accepted animal husbandry practices, including:

23 1. grooming;

24 2. raising;

25 3. breeding;

26 4. assisting with the birthing process; or

1 5. any other activity that provides care for an animal; or

2 (iv) generally accepted practices relating to the judging of breed
3 confirmation.

4 (b) A person may not:

5 (1) intentionally:

6 (i) mutilate an animal;

7 (ii) torture an animal;

8 (iii) cruelly beat an animal;

9 (iv) cruelly kill an animal; or

10 (v) engage in sexual contact with an animal; **OR**

11 (2) cause, procure, or authorize an act prohibited under item (1) of this
12 subsection]; or

13 (3) except in the case of self–defense, intentionally inflict bodily harm,
14 permanent disability, or death on an animal owned or used by a law enforcement unit].

15 (c) (1) A person who violates this section is guilty of the felony of aggravated
16 cruelty to animals and on conviction is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 3 years or a
17 fine not exceeding \$5,000 or both.

18 (2) As a condition of sentencing, the court may:

19 (i) order a defendant convicted of violating this section to:

20 1. participate in and pay for psychological counseling; and

21 2. pay, in addition to any other fines and costs, all reasonable
22 costs incurred in removing, housing, treating, or euthanizing an animal confiscated from
23 the defendant; and

24 (ii) prohibit a defendant from owning, possessing, or residing with
25 an animal for a specified period of time.

26 **10–606.1.**

27 (A) (1) **IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**
28 **INDICATED.**

1 **(2) “EMERGENCY RESPONSE ANIMAL” MEANS:**

2 **(I) A DOG USED BY A LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT IN THE STATE**
3 **THAT IS TRAINED FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT WORK AND IS SUBJECT TO THE CONTROL**
4 **OF A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER WHO HAS COMPLETED HANDLER TRAINING IN**
5 **ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLICIES OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT THAT EMPLOYS**
6 **THE OFFICER;**

7 **(II) A HORSE USED BY A LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT IN THE STATE**
8 **FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT WORK; OR**

9 **(III) A SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG TRAINED FOR OR ENGAGED IN**
10 **AN EFFORT DIRECTED BY A STATE AGENCY OR A POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OF THE**
11 **STATE TO LOCATE OR RESCUE A LOST, INJURED, OR DECEASED INDIVIDUAL.**

12 **(3) “SERIOUS PHYSICAL INJURY” MEANS PHYSICAL INJURY THAT**
13 **CAUSES PERMANENT OR PROTRACTED:**

14 **(I) DISFIGUREMENT;**

15 **(II) LOSS OF THE FUNCTION OF ANY BODILY MEMBER OR**
16 **ORGAN; OR**

17 **(III) IMPAIRMENT OF THE FUNCTION OF ANY BODILY MEMBER**
18 **OR ORGAN.**

19 **(B) (1) A PERSON MAY NOT INTENTIONALLY HARASS OR INTERFERE WITH**
20 **AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE ANIMAL DURING THE LAWFUL PERFORMANCE OF THE**
21 **EMERGENCY RESPONSE ANIMAL’S DUTIES.**

22 **(2) A PERSON MAY NOT INTENTIONALLY INJURE AN EMERGENCY**
23 **RESPONSE ANIMAL.**

24 **(3) A PERSON MAY NOT VIOLATE PARAGRAPH (1) OR (2) OF THIS**
25 **SUBSECTION DURING THE COMMISSION OF A CRIME.**

26 **(4) A PERSON MAY NOT INTENTIONALLY KILL OR CAUSE SERIOUS**
27 **PHYSICAL INJURY TO AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE ANIMAL.**

28 **(C) (1) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES SUBSECTION (B)(1) OR (2) OF THIS**
29 **SECTION IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO**

1 IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 1 YEAR OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$5,000 OR
2 BOTH.

3 (2) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES SUBSECTION (B)(3) OF THIS SECTION IS
4 GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT
5 NOT EXCEEDING 2 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$15,000 OR BOTH.

6 (3) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES SUBSECTION (B)(4) OF THIS SECTION IS
7 GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT
8 NOT EXCEEDING 5 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$10,000 OR BOTH.

9 (D) A SENTENCE IMPOSED UNDER THIS SECTION MAY BE IMPOSED
10 SEPARATE FROM AND CONSECUTIVE TO OR CONCURRENT WITH A SENTENCE FOR
11 ANY CRIME BASED ON THE ACT ESTABLISHING THE VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION.

12 (E) (1) NOTHING IN THIS SECTION PROHIBITS A DEFENDANT FROM
13 ASSERTING THE DEFENSE OF NECESSITY TO A CHARGE OF VIOLATING THIS SECTION.

14 (2) IT IS AN AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE TO A CHARGE OF VIOLATING THIS
15 SECTION THAT THE DEFENDANT ACTED REASONABLY TO PREVENT PHYSICAL HARM
16 RESULTING FROM A VIOLATION OF THE MARYLAND USE OF FORCE STATUTE UNDER
17 § 3-572 OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE.

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

Approved:

Governor.

President of the Senate.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.