

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 53

(Delegate Lehman, *et al.*)

Judiciary

Criminal Law – Nondomesticated Animal Prohibitions – Alterations

This bill alters existing provisions that prohibit importing into the State, offering for sale, trading, bartering, possessing, breeding, or exchanging various live nondomesticated animals (see Current Law), by (1) adding zebras, kangaroos, wallaroos, and wallabies to the list of prohibited live nondomesticated animals, subject to an exception for a person who possesses one or more of those animals on or before October 1, 2026; (2) limiting an exception for nonresidents traveling between locations outside the State so that a nonresident may only be in the State with an animal for 48 hours or less instead of 10 days or less; and (3) removing an exception for a nondomesticated animal serving as an assistance animal for a person with a severe mobility-limiting disability.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect local government finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Prohibitions – Zebras, Kangaroos, Wallaroos, and Wallabies

The bill adds zebras, kangaroos, wallaroos, and wallabies to a list of live nondomesticated animals that may not be imported into the State, offered for sale, traded, bartered,

possessed, bred, or exchanged (subject to exceptions for certain licensed individuals or entities and certain others). However, the bill does not prohibit a person who has lawful possession of a zebra, kangaroo, wallaroo, or wallaby on or before October 1, 2026, from continuing to possess the animal if the person provides written notification to the local animal control authority by December 1, 2026.

Limitation of Exception for Nonresidents Traveling Through the State

An exception to the above-mentioned prohibitions, that applies to a nonresident of the State who is in the State for 10 days or less for the purpose of traveling between locations outside of the State, is modified to only apply to a nonresident that is in the State for 48 hours or less (instead of 10 days or less).

Removal of Exception for an Assistance Animal

The bill removes an exception from the prohibition against possession of a listed nondomesticated animal that allows a person – who has a disability that severely limits mobility – to possess a listed nondomesticated animal if it is (1) specially trained to perform tasks for the person and (2) dedicated to improving the person's quality of life.

Current Law: A person may not import into the State, offer for sale, trade, barter, possess, breed, or exchange a live:

- fox, skunk, raccoon, or bear;
- caiman, alligator, or crocodile;
- nondomestic cat or hybrid of a nondomestic cat and a domestic cat if the hybrid weighs over 30 pounds;
- nondomestic dog or hybrid of a nondomestic dog and a domestic dog;
- nonhuman primate, including a lemur, monkey, chimpanzee, gorilla, orangutan, marmoset, loris, or tamarin; or
- specified species of poisonous snake.

A person who violates the prohibitions is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to (1) if an individual, a fine of up to \$1,000 and (2) if not an individual, a fine of up to \$10,000. The prohibitions may be enforced by (1) any State or local law enforcement officer or (2) the local animal control authority for the jurisdiction where the violation occurs.

Various exceptions to the prohibitions apply to specified licensed individuals or entities, including research facilities and animal exhibitors (such as zoos and circuses), and certain others. One of the exceptions is for a nonresident who is in the State for 10 days or less for the purpose of traveling between locations outside the State. There is also an exception to

the prohibition against possession of a listed animal for a person with a disability that severely limits mobility, if the animal is (1) specially trained to perform tasks for the owner and (2) dedicated to improving the person's quality of life.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced in the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore, Frederick, and Somerset counties; Maryland Association of Counties; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

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jg/jkb

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