



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

HB 406

DATE: February 26, 2020

SPONSOR: Delegate Lehman, et al.

ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation

CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (Sara.Morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: OPPOSE (Montgomery County Department of Police)

Crimes – Unattended Dogs in Extreme Weather Conditions

House Bill 406 would prohibit a person from leaving a dog outside and unattended for longer than 30 minutes without access to continuous “suitable shelter” during “extreme weather conditions.” Violators would be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to imprisonment for up to 90 days and/or a maximum fine of \$1,000.

Reports of animals being left outside in extreme weather conditions have led State and local governments across the country to enact laws and regulations that penalize pet owners for animal cruelty. While some long-haired and thick-coated dog breeds are bred for colder climates, all dogs are susceptible to frostbite and hypothermia in below-freezing weather. And, in the summer, high temperatures, combined with humidity, can cause dogs to suffer dehydration and heatstroke.

Montgomery County recognized the importance of this issue several years ago and responded by adopting Executive Regulation 17-17 – Anti-cruelty Conditions for Dogs – and a comprehensive County Emergency Weather Plan. Both initiatives provide dog owners with clear guidance about space, shelter, and protection requirements for their animals, and, in fact, put the County in a better position to enforce anti-cruelty regulations than those proposed under HB 406.

For that reason, the Montgomery County Department of Police opposes HB 406 and urges the Committee to adopt an unfavorable report of the bill.