



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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February 26, 2020

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Crimes – Unattended Dogs in Extreme Weather Conditions- HB 406 - SUPPORT with amendment.

Chairman Barve, Vice Chairman Stein, members of the Environment & Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before to you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chairman of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the House Environment & Transportation Committee vote favorably for Crimes – Unattended Dogs in Extreme Weather Conditions – HB 406 with amendment.

This bill will give law enforcement and the public clear and consistent minimum standards with respect to leaving dogs outside and unattended in extreme weather conditions. Extreme weather laws have recently passed in ten Maryland counties. There are fundamental similarities, as well as differences, in each of those laws. This bill is the result of feedback from animal control agencies across Maryland, including those that had and had not passed extreme weather laws, to find language that would work in counties as diverse as Garrett, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, Carroll, Montgomery, Baltimore County and Baltimore City. One of the key pieces of feedback was that it is impossible for some owners to bring their large outdoor dogs into their homes in extreme weather. This bill not only enumerates basic, commonsense standards to protect unattended dogs from suffering in extreme weather conditions but also it allows for dogs to remain outdoors in these conditions provided that they have continuous access to suitable shelter, which is defined in the bill.

Animal control officers are usually called when it is almost too late and dogs are suffering seizures, heatstroke, hypothermia, and death after being outdoors for long periods of time in extreme weather conditions. This bill will reduce the suffering these animals endure, and the serious consequences, including death, caused by these conditions. It will provide a consistent standard across Maryland that does not change as a dog is moved between jurisdictions.

Establishing guidelines about dogs left outdoors enables animal control officers to intervene before a dog shows symptoms of acute distress. Moreover, adding clarity to the law can foster both public awareness and compliance, which could potentially avert some of these life-threatening situations before they occur.

In closing, I would like to thank Delegate Lehman for her sponsorship of HB 406 and ask this committee to give this bill a favorable report.

Let Kindness Reign, Vote Humane

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