



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

February 13, 2020

Dear Chairman Kelley, Vice Chairman Feldman, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

As the President and Chairman of Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc., I am writing to you in support of SB 260 - Labor and Unemployment Leave With Pay – Bereavement Leave (Family Bereavement Act).

As you know, Maryland Votes for Animals champions humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. We also value the people with whom our animals spend their time. In fact, most families consider their pets to be cherished family members. Therefore, I am writing to you as the voice not of the animals, but of the humans who love their pets.

Our relationships with our animals is very personal. Many of them live for decades in our homes. The twenty years that a cat or dog lives is similar to the time a child spends in their parents' home before they go to work or college. Our pets see us at our best, and are there to comfort us at our worst. People speak emotionally about how a pet helped them get through a difficult time including PTSD, relationship strife, divorces, substance abuse, and the loss of a loved one.

Many of you on the Senate Finance Committee have pets. Sadly, some of you have most likely suffered the loss of a beloved pet. As the owner of an insurance agency and premium finance company for thirty years, I have heard my employees wax poetic about their pets. I believe that employees would deeply appreciate this option to use leave with pay in the face of losing a beloved pet who was a valued family member. Moreover, from a purely business standpoint, they are less likely to be productive when they are dealing with the loss.

Our pets are often the first face that we see when we wake up, and the first when we get home from school or work. They often come into the bathroom with us and sleep in our beds. Therefore, in such a close personal relationship as with a beloved family member, it seems fair that employees should be able to take bereavement time with pay just as they would for a human family member within the limits specified in SB 260.

I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 260.

Sincerely,
Lisa G. Radov
President and Chairman
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