



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

SB 627

DATE: March 10, 2020

SPONSOR: Senator Kramer, et al.

ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings

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

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT (Montgomery County Department of Police)

Crimes – Unattended Dogs in Extreme Weather Conditions

Senate Bill 627 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.

The Montgomery County Department of Police supports the goal of this legislation – to protect animals from extreme weather conditions. However, the Department respectfully requests that the bill be amended to allow the County to continue to follow extreme weather standards adopted in 2017 as Executive Regulation 17-17 – Anti-cruelty Conditions for Dogs – as well as those established under the County’s comprehensive Emergency Weather Plan. Both standards 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 SB 627.

For that reason, the Montgomery County Department of Police supports SB 627 with the proposed amendment and respectfully urges the Committee to adopt a favorable report.