



Anne Arundel County Police Department
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Timothy J. Altomare
Chief of Police

February 24th, 2020

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Opposition Senate Bill 925 – Criminal Law – Dangerous and Potentially Dangerous Dogs – Classification and Requirements

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

The Anne Arundel County Police Department opposes SB 925 as written, as it does not put the safety of the public first, has proclivity toward unstandardized enforcement/interpretation and has unfunded mandates.

Anne Arundel County takes the safety of our public, both human and animal, seriously. We have made several changes to the Public Safety Laws in recent years to put together a standard that complements existing state law and gives our Animal Care & Control Section appropriate discretion.

When our section deems an animal Potentially Dangerous, Dangerous or Vicious it does so in response to a public safety violation. Owners have appeal rights if they believe our designation, or the restrictions put in place, in accordance with State and County laws is unjust. The stipulations put in place are meant to prevent animals from putting the public in danger again. Removal of these designations (and therefore the restrictions in place), due to lack of additional incidents, puts the public in jeopardy because it is the restrictions, not changes in the nature of the animal, that prevent reoccurrence. No animal with an Administrative designation should have the ability to be involved in another public safety incident as long as the owner remains compliant. This legislation requires declassification. Who would be liable when someone is hurt by an animal that was “declassified”?

Our Animal Care & Control Section handles approximately 2,000 public safety investigations each year and based on all of those incidents less than 60 administrative orders are issued as a result. Our County currently has approximately 300 animals deemed potentially dangerous or dangerous. The addition of more levels of Administrative Orders, responsible ownership classes and declassification of animals would result in even greater workload for an already overburdened staff. These items are the definition of unfunded mandates, because for

our County to handle the additional workload created by the aforementioned items, we would need additional staff positions and additional funding.

Our County has concerns about the subjective nature of many of the items in this bill. We believe in fact based and consistent enforcement. This bill, though well intended, is not in the best interest of public safety and therefore we respectfully oppose the legislation as written and request your unfavorable vote on the bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'RSCA', written in a cursive style.

Robin Catlett
Administrator
Animal Care & Control Section