



Maryland Municipal League

The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

March 3, 2020

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings

Bill: SB 925 – Criminal Law – Dangerous and Potentially Dangerous Dogs – Classification and Requirements

Position: Support

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League supports SB 925. This bill repeals a provision of law that authorizes an appropriate unit of a county or municipal corporation to determine whether a dog is potentially dangerous under certain circumstances and instead requires an appropriate unit of a county or municipal corporation to classify a certain dog by level of potential danger as determined by certain factors.

Municipalities often classify dangerous dogs in some fashion, but there is no consistency in the definitions. In addition, when a situation arises where a dog is determined to be dangerous, under current law, municipal officials are limited in the actions they can take to ensure the safety of their residents. This legislation would clarify the four levels of what determines a “dangerous dog” and sets out the various actions available in dealing with the behaviors exhibited by the dog.

The League has received information from one member cities citing potential liability when a dog is declassified and another incident occurs after the dog has been reclassified. Also, “Responsible Pet Ownership Program” is not defined and “reasonable likelihood of repeat dangerous behavior” is not an existing standard, which could expose a local government to potential liability based on this undefined determination.

The League therefore respectfully requests that this committee provide SB 925 with a favorable report taking into consideration the concerns listed above.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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