



**Maryland's Association of Animal Care and
Control Agencies and Humane Societies**

**PO Box 1143
Easton, Maryland 21601**

**SB 925 Criminal Law- Dangerous and Potentially Dangerous Dogs
Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Wednesday March 4, 2020**

Dear Honorable Chairman Smith and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland, the state federation of animal control agencies and shelters, I wish to thank you for the time you took in yesterday's hearing to learn about the concerns our organization and others have involving the proposed changes to the current Maryland Dangerous Dog Statute- **Annotated Code of Maryland. Criminal Law. Title 10. Crimes Against Public Health, Conduct, and Sensibilities. Subtitle 6. Crimes Relating to Animals. § 10-619. Dangerous dog.**

As we shared, the purpose of Animal Control in the State of Maryland is public and animal safety. The Dangerous Dog Statute is a required tool to keep people and pets safe in Maryland. The changes being proposed by SB 925 will weaken the current law.

- Supporters of the bill have presented dogs deemed potentially dangerous as "puppies that nip." Animals deemed dangerous or potentially dangerous are not animals involved in "a little nip." These are all animals which fulfill the threshold described in MD Code, Criminal Law, § 10-619.
- There was discussion about giving these dogs a second chance. We appreciate and strive for second chances for animals that have been abandoned, abused, or in need of a new home. When we are discussing public safety, we must be absolutely clear the safety of those we serve takes precedence over the opportunity for an animal to have a determination removed.
- Each county in Maryland has a law on dangerous dogs and procedures in place to keep our communities safe. City and county officials are charged with passing local ordinances to ensure the health, welfare and safety of the people and animals in their jurisdiction. The Maryland General Assembly should respect the work of our local elected officials and trust that they have taken into consideration the unique needs of their county in crafting their policies. If individuals have issues with a specific county law, the place for action should be at the county government.
- On the point of liability, we still feel this is highly problematic. While inevitably there may be protection for those under county government, to be sued civilly and have claims of negligence due to the reversal of a determination which results in further bodily harm to a person, pet or livestock is certainly not advisable or in the best interest of the public or our agencies and organizations as dealing with these suits will take resources away from our programs and will be detrimental to public image regardless of outcome.

Professional Animal Workers of Maryland continues to have grave concerns regarding any changes to the Maryland State Dangerous Dog Statute. We believe any changes to the current law would not be in the best interest of public safety and thusly respectfully request an unfavorable vote on the bill.

Thank you so very much for your time, I welcome you to contact me at any time regarding our concerns.

Sincerely,

Patty Crankshaw-Quimby

Executive Director/Chief Animal Control Officer: Talbot Humane/ Talbot County Animal Control

President: Professional Animal Workers of Maryland