



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

January 20, 2021

Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB159

***Criminal Law - Humane Society and Animal Control Officers -
Education and Training Requirements***

FAVORABLE

The Humane Society of the United States, on behalf of our members and supporters in Maryland, urge a favorable report on SB159, to require training for animal control officers in Maryland. The state federation of animal control agencies and shelters, the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland, has requested SB159 in order to ensure their members are adequately equipped for their roles to keep the community safe and protect animals.

While these officers do not have the same powers as sworn officers, like to arrest or detain individuals, they are enforcing certain laws. It is important for public confidence, safety of officers and animals, and for officers to be valued as professional public servants that these officers are adequately trained. Eleven states –Arkansas, California, Colorado, Indiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington–currently have a statutory requirement for training of animal control officers.

There are different options that exist currently for training, and importantly, SB159 allows each individual county agency to decide where to send their officers for training based on each agency's individual budget, staffing and needs. An organization that offers one such online training program, the National Animal Care & Control Association is a non-profit organization that is committed to setting the standard of professionalism in animal welfare and public safety through training, networking, and advocacy. The American Animal Cruelty Investigations School also offers a variety of courses both for new animal control officers and for continuing education training. Additionally, the East Coast Animal Control Academy offers a comprehensive two weeks of face to face training at the MD Police Training Facility as a result of more than a decade of collaboration between Carroll Community College and state and local humane and law enforcement agencies. It is worth highlighting, given our current limitations on in-person meetings, that these trainings could be performed virtually if conditions still require it when this bill takes effect.

Requiring training for animal control officers is a sensible public safety measure designed and is supported by the agencies charged with animal control enforcement. For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on SB159.

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