



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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**SB 159**

**DATE: January 20, 2021**

**SPONSOR: Senator Waldstreicher**

**ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings**

**CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (sara.morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)**

**POSITION: SUPPORT (Montgomery County Office of Animal Services)**

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

Senate Bill 159 establishes training requirements for animal welfare professionals employed to investigate and enforce State and local laws and regulations. Currently, many animal control officers throughout the State operate without the benefit of formal standardized training by experts in criminal investigations, enforcement, animal care and handling, and humane education because these training opportunities are considered optional and not required.

There are opportunities for animal control training both in the State and nationally; however, in Maryland, there are currently no requirements for animal control officers to attend this training. Senate Bill 159 would correct this and ensure future animal control officers receive this much needed professional training. Our neighboring state, Virginia, requires all of its Animal Control Officers to receive standardized training through a state approved training program. Virginia recognized that animal control officers greatly benefitted from standardized training given the variety of animals they may encounter, particularly those that may be subject to potential abuse, neglect or cruel treatment. Senate Bill 159 will help professionalize animal control as a career and help support local government's continuing efforts to employ best practices when responding to violations of laws and regulations.

Senate Bill 159 will require 80 hours of initial training within the first 12 months of employment in the position of animal control officers, six hours annually of continuing education, and allows for the details of the training to be determined by the agencies.

The Montgomery County Office of Animal Services supports Senate Bill 159 and would urge the adoption of a favorable report by the Committee.