March 4, 2021

HB 1080 - Criminal Law – Animal Cruelty – Petition for Costs for Care of Seized Animal
SUPPORT

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

The Maryland Veterinary Medical Association (MDVMA) was established in 1886 and is the largest professional and advocacy organization for veterinarians and technicians in Maryland. MDVMA's mission is to serve as a leading resource for the veterinary community through communication, education, representation and support for the advancement of animal and public health in Maryland. Our members are licensed practitioners in the fields of small animal, equine and food animal health.

MDVMA supports provisions outlined in HB 1080 that would allow an authorized agent of a humane society, or a public official required to protect animals to file a petition against the owner or custodian of the animal with the court in the county where seizure of the animal occurred for the reasonable costs of caring for the animal, including the provision of food, water, shelter, and medical care. The petition may only be filed if the seizure of the animal was conducted in accordance with current law set out in Section 10-615 of the Maryland Criminal Law article regarding animal cruelty, removal of the animal, and protection of the animal.

Animals should not be treated cruelly. Allowing identified caretakers to recover costs of animal care while an animal has been legally separated from its owner further penalizes the bad actor by making the owner responsible for these care costs. Additionally, these bill provisions will incentivize identified caretakers to care for the animal sufficiently, knowing they will recover expenses from the animal owner should the petition be accepted.

For these reasons, the MDVMA respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 1080.

Sincerely,

Matthew Weeman DVM, MS
Owner, Bayside Bovine Veterinary Services
MDVMA Legislative Committee Chairman