

January 25, 2021

Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of HB 234: Criminal Law – Harm to Service Animals

Good day members of the Judiciary Committee.

I am writing to you today to support for making the harm of a service animal a crime. As a parent or a child with disabilities, and an advocate for persons with disabilities of all types, I think this bill is a great idea. How is this not already a law?

Persons living with a variety of physical and mental challenges rely on these wonderful animals every day in order to go about their daily routine, and to live their lives. These animals bring a richness and level of devotion to their owners that is unparalleled. I think it's safe to say that many of us within the disabilities community would not be able to accomplish many of the normal daily tasks of life without the aid of their service animal.

These animals are many things to us; helpers, companions, support and most importantly family members. The thought of one of these animals being intentionally harmed is just unimaginable. As the loss of such an animal would be devastating to any individual with disabilities, and their family as a whole. After all there are a lot of hours, care and expense that goes into training a service animal. It would be such a waste and great loss to the community to have one of these animals harmed and forced out of service.

Let's act to protect service animals and the individuals that rely on them every day to lead fuller, richer lives because of their animal's companionship and assistance.

We hope that you will all fully support this bill and make the intentional harming of a service animal a serious crime in the state of Maryland.

Please vote to support HB 234 and return a favorable vote on this important bill.

Thank you for your time and considering of my testimony today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo,
Parent and advocate for children with disabilities and Maryland families.
Parent Advocacy Consortium