

**HB-1080 - Criminal Law – Animal Cruelty – Petition for Costs for  
Care of Seized Animal  
Maryland Horse Council, FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT**

Hearing before the House Judiciary Committee,  
March 4, 2021

The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is a membership-based, umbrella trade association of the entire horse industry in Maryland. Our membership includes horse farms and stables, horse-related businesses, and horse owners, representing all facets of the Maryland equestrian community, from the owners of race horses to the owners of trail horses or just beloved retired companion horses. As such, we represent over 30,000 Marylanders.



**MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL**  
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MHC recognizes that Maryland's current animal abuse and neglect seizure law (Criminal Law Section 10-615) provides too little guidance or structure to courts, law enforcement, and animal control authorities when domestic animals suffer and seizure is the only option. There are a number of post-seizure disposition options available for livestock that would mitigate or even obviate the need to provide for compensation of costs of care for the seizing authority. HB1080, as drafted, does not provide a such a range of disposition options for abused and suffering livestock (including horses, mules, and donkeys), that is acceptable to MHC. Nor does HB1080, as drafted, do anything to correct some built-in incentives for seizing agencies to overreach their mission during livestock seizures.

MHC has worked with Professional Animal Workers of Maryland (PAWS) and anticipates that the sponsor shall amend HB1080 to exclude all livestock by species from its application. HB1080, as amended, provides good options for abused *companion* animals and the cost of their care after seizure and before trial while placing the burden of that care on the abusing custodian. Therefore, MHC supports HB1080, provided it is amended to exclude all livestock.

Respectfully submitted,

Maryland Horse Council