



OFFICE OF ANIMAL SERVICES

Marc Elrich

County Executive

Thomas J. Koenig

Executive Director

**Testimony of Dr. Gregory Lawrence
Chief Veterinarian for Montgomery County's Office of Animal Services**

**In Support of Senate Bill 672
*Criminal Law – Animal Abuse or Neglect – Penalties***

**Judicial Proceedings Committees
March 8, 2022**

Good afternoon Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee. My name is Dr. Gregory Lawrence, and I have served as the Chief Veterinarian for Montgomery County's Office of Animal Services since 2014.

Senate Bill 672 would amend Maryland's Criminal Law Article §10-604 when a violation of the section leads to the death or euthanasia of animals subjected to the criminal violations. In my 18 years of experience as a veterinarian, I have seen all degrees of animal cruelty. From this perspective, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of SB 672 and hope it will compel you to advance this important legislation.

While many of these animal cruelty cases do not reach the legal requirements of aggravated cruelty, the pain and suffering inflicted on animals can be just as severe. Starvation cases are a perfect example of this. These animals experience extreme suffering over an extended period and face a slow, painful death without intervention. Because there is no definitive test for starvation, I must first rule out any medical cause for the animal's emaciation. Once it is determined that there is no identifiable medical cause, I can then provide proper nutrition and document that the animal not only willingly eats when food is offered but gains weight, as well. These animals must be nourished in a very structured manner to avoid life-threatening cardiac failure complications that can occur in the most extreme cases.

Another common violation of Maryland Criminal Law Article §10-604 involves the lack of necessary veterinary care for various medical conditions that, if left untreated, can lead to the unnecessary death of an animal. The lack of even the most basic veterinary care for flea infestation or common bacterial infection, for example, can result in life-threatening medical complications that could have been avoided if properly treated. We also see this in cases involving unsanitary conditions and failure to provide proper space and/or ventilation for animals. In those types of environments, animals are subjected to pain and suffering resulting in serious medical conditions that might have otherwise been minor (and treatable) had the animal been living in a healthy setting.

I support SB 672 and would urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report.

Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center

7315 Muncaster Mill Road • Derwood, Maryland 20855
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/animalservices • INFOMCASAC@montgomerycountymd.gov