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MAJORITY WHIP

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB816 - Favorable - Real Property - Actions for Possession - Pet Protections

Senate bill 816 is a policy in response the growing concerns of evictions related to the pandemic and related economic strains that has caused for so many Marylanders. This legislation provides guidance to landlords when dealing with pets in the eviction process.

The Department of Agriculture will develop and make available a fact sheet on the handling of pets during an eviction or loss of real property. The sheet is to be made available along with notice or summons during eviction proceedings. Further, this bill requires notice be made to the local sheriffs, animal control, or animal recuses so that the pet be safely sheltered and not left on public property after eviction. Upon contact with the pet owner, the pet is to be returned to the owner or designee.

I have brought this bill forward as Marylanders and their pets have been displaced during this crisis. Pets should not face the same fate as personal property, such as a couch placed on the sidewalk at eviction. Tenants facing eviction deal with an onslaught of information but seldom receive information on resources for sheltering a pet while finding new residence. The first provision of this bill requires that the fact sheet contacting resources for the tenant, including local shelters and options for caring for the pet.

Post eviction, this bill requires the property-owner to immediately check the premises for pets and attempt to reunite the pet with the owner or arrive at a local pet shelter. If taken to a shelter, the shelter should be provided the owner's information and the owner provided with the shelter information. Lastly, the pet may not be left with personal property on the sidewalk after eviction.

This bill simply provides guidance for landlords, tenants, and those who enforce landlord-tenant matters. For these reasons, I request a favorable report on SB816.