

# **Written Testimony - Actions for Possession - Pet P**

Uploaded by: Caroline Griffin

Position: FAV

## Senate Bill 816

**TO:** Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

**DATE:** March 1, 2022

**FROM:** Caroline A. Griffin, Esquire

**RE:** **SB 816 – Real Property – Actions for Possession – Pet Protections**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee. My name is Caroline A. Griffin; I am an attorney and reside in Baltimore City. I served as Chair of the Baltimore Mayor's Anti-Animal Abuse Advisory Commission from 2009 – 2013 and currently chair the Maryland Spay Neuter Advisory Board. I am the co-founder of the non-profit Show Your Soft Side, a national anti-cruelty campaign, and currently serve on the Boards of the Animal Welfare Institute and Days' End Farm Horse Rescue. I support SB 816 – Real Property – Actions for Possession – Pet Protections.

SB 816 codifies best practices for protecting animals during an eviction. While the Baltimore Sheriff's Office has implemented these practices and contacts BARCS Animal Shelter to take possession of animals during an eviction, this policy is not enforced uniformly. Accordingly, legislation is needed, even in jurisdictions where agencies have taken steps to prevent animal abandonment during evictions.

On January 7, 2022, a citizen contacted my non-profit, Show Your Soft Side, seeking assistance following a family member's eviction from an apartment on Frederick Road in Baltimore City. The citizen reported that 3 cats were left in the apartment and that neither the deputy sheriff nor the landlord allowed the tenant to retrieve her cats. We instructed the citizen to contact Baltimore City Animal Control, which removed the animals the following day. *A copy of this Service Request Summary Report is attached.* Fortunately, in this instance, a concerned citizen notified the authorities; many animals are not so lucky.

Animals abandoned in properties endure extreme suffering. Six years ago, Raven Ronnie Stanley, an ambassador in the Show Your Soft Side campaign, adopted his dog Lola from BARCS Animal Shelter. Lola, who was found locked inside a room of an empty house without food or water, attempted to eat through a wall to escape. As forensic veterinarian Martha Smith-Blackmore notes in an upcoming book:

Animals enclosed in spaces without access to food may pace or dig or chew at corners, walls, window frames or doorways out of frustration, hunger or in an attempt to escape, leaving claw or chew marks from their efforts. Animals in late-stage starvation will be too weak to stand or reposition themselves, and the skin may be more vulnerable to trauma. These animals may suffer

from pressure sores over bony prominences, urine scald or flystrike with maggot activity.<sup>i</sup>

Since January 1, 2022, Baltimore City Animal Control has responded to 5 service requests involving individuals who had abandoned animals at a property. In each instance, the animals were deceased or emaciated. Animals that survive being abandoned for several days or weeks require extensive veterinary care, which our municipal animal shelters – and ultimately taxpayers – must pay.

The benefits of enacting SB816 significantly outweigh the burdens imposed on landlords and sheriff offices. I urge you to issue a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Caroline A. Griffin, Esquire

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<sup>i</sup> Investigating Animal Abuse Crime Scenes: A Field Guide, CRC Press/Taylor and Francis Group by Drs. Virginia Maxwell and Martha Smith-Blackmore. Dr. Maxwell is a professor at the University of New Haven's Henry C. Lee College of Criminal Justice and Forensic Science. Dr. Smith-Blackmore is a Visiting Fellow at the Harvard Law School's Brooks McCormick Jr. Animal Law & Policy Program.

## Service Request Summary Report

22-00013327

Printed Date: Feb 23, 2022 - 8:37:27 AM

**Type:** HLTH-Animal In  
Danger/Injured/Abused/Neglected  
**Created By:** Lynne Hellman  
**Service Request Owner:** HLTH\_ANIMAL  
**Method Received:** Phone  
**SLA Detail:** 3 Business Days

**SR #:** 22-00013327  
**Priority:** Urgent  
**Status:** Closed  
**Status Date:** Jan 07, 2022 11:38:17 AM  
**Created Date:** Jan 06, 2022 5:28:54 PM  
**Overdue on:** Jan 11, 2022 5:28:54 PM  
**Closed on:** Jan 07, 2022 11:38:17 AM

**Location:** 4119 FREDERICK AVE, Baltimore City,  
21229

**Location Details:**

**Description:** apartment 3 the owner of the apartment is jenifer jones her address is 3818 park heights 443 414  
-4092

### Service Questions

Questions	Answers
This service request is to be used for domestic animals only (e.g. dogs, cats, etc.). Is this concern about a domestic animal?	Yes
Is the animal trapped in a vacant building?	Yes
What is happening to the animal?	citizen said the tenants were evicted yesterday citizen said the landlord refused to let them retrieve their cats citizen said there are 3 cats they have been in there since yesterday with no food or water
Is the animal suffering or in immediate danger of death?	Do not know
Have you called the police?	No
Where is the animal precisely located (e.g., inside, outside, street address, intersection, business name, etc.):	inside apartment #3
What type of animal?	cats
What is the size of the animal?	Medium (tri-cycle)
What color is the animal?	tabby
List any distinguishing features (e.g., stripes, spots, patches, scar, missing limb, etc.):	
Do you know the animal's owner?	Yes
Owner's name?	joann koros
Describe the owner:	5'2" average height
Is the owner present/at home?	

### Contact Information

Name	Address	Email	Phones/Extensions
cynthia murray		locketsbyangel@gmail.com	+1 (443) 604-7112

### Service Activities

Activity Name	Status	Assigned To	Outcome	Outcome Reason	Finish Date
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Service Response	Complete	Jessica Novak	Work completed	Resolved	1/7/2022 11:34 AM
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#### Resolution Questions

Service Activity	Resolution Question	Resolution Answer
Service Response	Is this a Neglect or Cruelty case?	

#### Comments

Comment	Comment By	Created Date
Service Response : AEO Novak/Genis on 1/7/22 at 1115am, p/u three cats from eviction that happened on 1/5/21. Owner, Joann Koros (410-651-4270) was on scene and would like cats back once she finds a place to live. Cats are "Baby Girl", "Patches" and "Nippy" (all DSH, gray/white). "Baby Girl" does have matts on her back. Owner was given BARCS number to call about the KPWF program.	Jessica Novak	1/7/2022 11:38 AM

#### Related Child Service Requests

#### Related Parent Service Requests

Report Date: Feb 23, 2022 - 8:37:27 AM

# **SB 816 Hovermale FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Emily Hovermale

Position: FAV



**HUMANE  
RESCUE  
ALLIANCE**  
*Animals. People. Community.*

March 2, 2022

Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Maryland Senate  
11 Bladen St  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Humane Rescue Alliance SUPPORT for SB 816 – Real Property - Actions for Possession - Pet Protections**

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

On behalf of the Humane Rescue Alliance and our thousands of supporters in Maryland, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 816, legislation to help protect pets and their owners by putting in place basic guardrails for pet owners when evictions happen.

The Humane Rescue Alliance honors more than 150 years of commitment to protecting animals, supporting families, and advocating for positive change to create a world where all animals can thrive. Located in Washington, DC, we are the largest animal services provider in our region, touching the lives of over 100,000 animals annually through adoption, community veterinary care and other support services, and lost pet reunification. Last year, we adopted out over 4,000 animals to Maryland families.

According to the American Pet Products Association's National Pet Owners Survey for 2021-2022, pet ownership has increased to an estimated 70% of U.S. households that own a pet, and studies consistently show that the vast majority of people consider pets to be an important member of the family. The tremendous surge in pet adoption and fostering during the pandemic has underscored the value and importance of the human-animal bond. Now more than ever, with so many of us experiencing unparalleled isolation, the importance of animal companions cannot be overstressed, and peer reviewed studies show that the bond between people and their pets is linked to several health benefits including decreased feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and symptoms of PTSD. For someone who is in crisis losing their housing, the added trauma of being separated from their pet is unimaginable.

SB 816 creates basic requirements to help pet owners who are faced with eviction to keep or be reunified with their pets:

- The Department of Agriculture must create a fact sheet with resources for pet owners facing evictions, such as options for caring for your pet and how to contact your local shelter. This fact sheet must be provided to tenants who have pets and to all tenants who are facing eviction.
- After an eviction, the property must immediately be checked for pets, and any pets found should be either reunited with the owner or taken to the local animal shelter.
- Should a pet be taken to an animal shelter, the shelter should have the name and contact information of the owner, and the owner should be given the information for the shelter.
- No pets can be left with property on the curb after an eviction.

Through our direct experience as an animal sheltering organization, backed up by those of housing advocates, we see situations on a regular basis where eviction results in the separation of pets from their families. While these practices seem commonsense, and many jurisdictions and landlords do many of these practices voluntarily, we want to ensure that these practices are codified and universal. These practices are the most basic of protections for pets and their owners. We should do everything we can to keep pets out of animal shelters and with the people who love them.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report for SB 816.

Emily Hovermale  
Director of Government Affairs  
Humane Rescue Alliance



**SB816\_FAV\_HSUS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**March 2, 2022**

**Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**SB816**

***Real Property - Actions for Possession - Pet Protections***

**FAVORABLE**

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), on behalf of our Maryland supporters, strongly supports Senate Bill 816, which will establish basic guardrails to protect and inform pet owners and pets when evictions happen. Most particularly, in this time of uncertainty for people and their pets who are facing significant hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout 2020, in the face of an unprecedented public health emergency, our nation took immediate action to keep families stably housed by swiftly enacting eviction moratoriums and funding emergency rental assistance—critical tools that helped keep families and their pets at home. These temporary actions offered vital protections to tens of millions of renters at risk of eviction, and we’ve seen how critical layering protections at the state and local level were as the federal safety nets expired and a growing number of households fell behind on paying rent and utilities.

Animal and human welfare cannot be viewed independently and if we want to protect pets, we must also protect the people who are caring for them. A 2015 study by the ASPCA found that, among renters and especially for renters of lower income, housing insecurity was cited as the number one reason for pet relinquishment. The study found that while poverty itself is not a driver in pet retention, the ability to access affordable options for pet care and services was an important factor in otherwise capable and caring families in keeping their pet.

As tenant protections fade, eviction filings that were previously curtailed are moving forward and mounting rent debt may mean we’re on the brink of a mass eviction crisis. According to the National Equity Atlas, 102,000 Maryland households are behind on rent with an estimated \$322,800,000 owed in rent debt. Now more than ever, with so many of us experiencing unparalleled isolation and are housing insecure, the importance of companionship cannot be overstressed; and certainly, for someone who is already facing the trauma of losing their home, the added trauma of being separated from their pet is unimaginable.

The provisions of Senate Bill 816 will help ensure that those facing displacement are provided with the resources and information necessary to reunify with their beloved pets in case they are separated. If a pet is removed from the premises, active contact information for the owner is to be communicated with the animal shelter. The bill additionally requires that a unit is thoroughly searched for any pets, regardless of whether the tenant was permitted to keep animals on the property, to guarantee that no animal is forgotten.

Every one of these provisions comes from horror stories we have heard from both shelter and rescue partners, as well as housing advocates, regarding situations they directly witnessed. While these practices seem common sense, and many jurisdictions and landlords do many of these practices voluntarily, we want to ensure that these practices are codified and universal.

Too often when families are torn apart because information is not shared, and resources meant to serve our most vulnerable are left untapped. These practices are not onerous; they can be implemented through existing processes, and they create a necessary level of protection for our pets and their owners. We thank the committee for consideration of this important legislation and urge your support of SB 816.

# **Health Care for the Homeless - SB 816 FAV - Pet Re**

Uploaded by: Joanna Diamond

Position: FAV

**HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY**  
**IN SUPPORT OF**  
**SB 816 - Real Property - Actions for Possession - Pet Protections**

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**March 2, 2022**



**Health Care for the Homeless supports SB 816**, which would establish common-sense protections for families and their pets when facing eviction, such as providing owners with information about resources and where to find their pet if taken can protect families facing evictions. Unfortunately, many of our clients with pets face eviction and resources would be hugely helpful to manage that stressful situation.

On the Housing Services team at Health Care for the Homeless, our job is to help clients get connected to housing, navigate the process of searching for and transitioning to permanent housing, and then we provide supportive services to help them maintain their housing placements. Sadly, we have seen too many of our clients face eviction. In this scenario, if a client has a pet, one of the most detrimental effects can be the displacement and separation from their pet.

Many of the clients we work with often present with various mental health symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, trauma-related symptoms, and social disengagement. There is extensive research that supports the therapeutic effect of animals with those who are experiencing mental illness. Pets can improve your mood, they can decrease anxiety, they can increase your social interactions, they can help you cope with stress more effectively, and they can offer comfort and belonging to a client population that often feels overlooked or discarded. As such, many of our providers recommend an emotional support for their clients. However, in the case of an eviction, the next best thing is ensuring that their pet is safe with the hopes of being reunited with them in the future.

One client, Mr. Smith,<sup>1</sup> had a beloved dog in his home but when he suffered a stroke and lost his job, he experienced homelessness for three years after. He had to stay in a shelter that would not allow dogs. Luckily for Mr. Smith, his dog was able to stay with a friend until he was able to find permanent housing. In 2021, Mr. Smith was matched to permanent housing with supportive services through Health Care for the Homeless. One of his biggest goals was to be able to reunite with his dog in his new home. After Mr. Smith's friend had kept his dog safe during that time, Mr. Smith was finally reunited with his dog. His health dramatically improved. Where he used to walk with a walker, he now takes his dog for walks, and no longer needs his walker to ambulate. He enjoys introducing his dog to neighbors on their walks, which has increased his social engagement and sense of belonging in his new neighborhood. He is able to remain calm and cope with stressful situations much more effectively now that he has his dog back in his home.

Mr. Smith is lucky. Unfortunately, that is not the case for many of our clients who are faced with the devastating situation of an eviction and no resources for their beloved pets, forcing them to potentially put their pets in unsafe and unsecure situations. It would be very helpful to have a compiled list of resources to

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonym used for confidentiality purposes.

aid people facing eviction with finding their pet safe shelter. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 816.

*Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We work to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing quality, integrated health care and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy, and community engagement. We deliver integrated medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, and housing support services for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. For more information, visit [www.hchmd.org](http://www.hchmd.org).*

**SB816\_Fav\_KDangel.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katherine Dangel

Position: FAV

**March 2, 2022**

**Testimony from Katherine Dangel**

**SB816**

**Favorable**

Hello, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. My name is Katherine Dangel, and I am a sixth grader at Glenwood Middle School, in Western Howard County. I am here to support Senate Bill 816, which creates protections for pet owners facing evictions.

I moved in 2019, and I remember how difficult it felt; how unpredictable. I can only imagine if my family was facing an eviction, especially if we didn't know if our pets were okay. I moved under optimal circumstances; it was planned, I really wanted to do it, but it still felt out of control. If we were facing an eviction, it would be even harder. We knew that everything would be okay when we moved, most people facing evictions don't.

When I was moving, I really needed my dogs. They always made me feel better; if I didn't think they would be okay, it would be so much harder. I want to make sure everyone can have their pets through these difficult times.

When I was moving, there was a lot of planning, even for an optimal move. If we didn't have help planning the move, I doubt that everything would have gone so smoothly. I want more people to have these resources and have better moves.

And if the people don't plan for it, why should the pet suffer. Our pets do so much for us and are so loyal.

I was lucky on my move, because my pets got to stay with me. I want everyone to have these same merits. Please vote yes on Senate Bill 816.



**SB816.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katherine Flory

Position: FAV



2/25/22

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of S.B. 816. I would also like to thank Senator Lee for introducing this important piece of legislation. My name is Katie Flory, and I am the Community Care & Advocacy Director for the Maryland SPCA. Can you imagine coming home and finding out you have been evicted from your home? You are not sure what to do next and where to go. You are not able to get into your house and on top of all of that you do not know where your pet is? This happens frequently to people across the state. The Maryland SPCA and shelters across the state receive calls frequently from people trying to find their pets due to eviction. We hear the fear and panic in their voices. They do not know where to start looking for their pets or if they will ever see them again.

When COVID-19 pandemic started, our nation took immediate action to keep families stably housed by swiftly enacting eviction moratoriums and funding emergency rental assistance—critical tools that helped keep families and their pets at home. Those protections were crucial but as they start to evaporate, we must put in place a new set of emergency protections – ones that create guardrails to protect families facing eviction in the near future.

S.B. 816 establishes basic guardrails to protect and inform pet owners when evictions happen. There are 4 basic provisions in the bill. These include:

- The Department of Agriculture must create a fact sheet with resources for pet owners facing evictions, such as options for caring for your pet and how to contact your local shelter; that fact sheet must be provided to tenants who have pets and to all tenants who are facing eviction.
- After an eviction, the property must immediately be checked for pets and those pets should be either reunited with the owner or taken to the local shelter.
- Should a pet be taken to a shelter, the shelter should have the name and contact information of the owner and the owner should be given the information for the shelter.
- No pets can be left with property on the curb after an eviction.

While many jurisdictions and landlords do many of these practices voluntarily, we want to ensure that these practices are universal and do everything we can as a state to keep pets and people together.

Thank you for your time and I urge the Committee to give a favorable report of S.B. 816 .

# **Real Property - Actions for Possession - Pet Prote**

Uploaded by: Lisa Radov

Position: FAV



## MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411  
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

March 2, 2022

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.  
Re: Real Property – Actions for Possession – Pet Protections – SB 816 - Support

Chair Smith, Vice - Chair Waldstreicher, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov and I am the President and Chairman of the Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc. We champion legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. On behalf of our board of directors, as well as the thousands of members of Maryland Votes for Animals, I respectfully ask that this committee vote favorably for Real Property – Actions for Possession – Pet Protections – SB 816.

This bill creates a process that ensures pet owners are informed about their rights and responsibilities regarding their pets in the event of an eviction. Landlords would be required to provide a fact sheet prepared by the Department of Agriculture with resources for pet owners facing evictions including local shelter contact information. Immediately following an eviction, landlords would be required to check the property for pets, with the stipulation that any pets found on the property would either be reunited with their owner or taken to a shelter where the owner and shelter would both receive contact information from the landlord. Pets from an evicted family could not be left outside on the curb with a tenant's property after an eviction.

Covid has not only exacerbated the problem of housing insecurity, but also it has cast a spotlight on the increasing number of families with pets who face eviction. While some landlords may provide notification to renters about what to do with their pets in the case of an eviction, we have heard from far too many families that they cannot find where their pets were taken after an eviction. Moreover, our shelter and rescue partners have been receiving pets from these properties with no contact information. This creates difficult situations for the shelters and rescues as they cannot determine if the pet was abandoned - or belongs to a family that would want to reclaim their cherished pet.

We need to ensure that "best practices" are codified and being done uniformly by landlords. Landlords and property managers are accustomed to following the requirements of federal, state, and local laws to inform tenants of policies, facts, and rules in writing about the property. These disclosures can either be included in the lease or rental agreement, or some other form of writing, and are typically shared with the tenant prior to move – in, such as written disclosure of possible lead paint in buildings constructed before 1978. The steps required in this bill are not difficult to implement and will protect vulnerable families and their beloved pets during a very difficult time.

Thank you to Senator Lee for sponsoring SB 816. I urge this committee for a favorable report.

**SB816\_FAV\_Lee\_2022.pdf**

Uploaded by: Susan Lee

Position: FAV

SUSAN C. LEE  
Legislative District 16  
Montgomery County

MAJORITY WHIP

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on  
Cybersecurity, Information Technology,  
and Biotechnology

*Chair*

Maryland Legislative Asian American  
and Pacific Islander Caucus

*President Emeritus*

Women Legislators of the  
Maryland General Assembly, Inc.



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 223  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3124 · 301-858-3124  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3124  
Susan.Lee@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 2, 2022

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.

# **SB 816 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Donna Bernstein

Position: FWA





**MARYLAND  
LEGAL AID**

*Advancing*  
**Human Rights and  
Justice for All**

**STATEWIDE  
ADVOCACY SUPPORT UNIT**

**Cornelia Bright Gordon, Esq.**  
Director of Advocacy  
for Administrative Law  
(410) 951-7728  
cbgordon@mdlaborg

**Gregory Countess, Esq.**  
Director of Advocacy  
for Housing & Community  
Economic Development  
(410) 951-7687  
gcountess@mdlaborg

**Anthony H. Davis, II, Esq.**  
Director of Advocacy  
for Consumer Law  
(410) 951-7703  
adavis@mdlaborg

**Erica I. LeMon, Esq.**  
Director of Advocacy  
for Children's Rights  
(410) 951-7648  
elemon@mdlaborg

March 1, 2022

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill (SB) 816 – Real Property – Actions  
for Possession – Pet Protections.**

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important bill. Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to Maryland's low-income and vulnerable residents. MLA handles civil legal cases involving a wide range of issues, including family law, housing, public benefits, consumer law (e.g., bankruptcy and debt collection), and criminal record expungements to remove barriers to obtaining child custody and housing, a driver's license, and employment. Maryland Legal Aid supports SB 816 and asks that this committee give it a favorable report.

MLA recommends two amendments which would both increase the likelihood that pets left behind are kept safe and given a better chance of reuniting with their caretaker, and would also increase the likelihood of low-income pet owners accessing valuable information and resources to improve quality of life for both the pet owner and their pet. This letter serves as notice that Donna Bernstein, Esq. will testify in support of Senate Bill 816 on behalf of Maryland Legal Aid at the request of Senator Susan Lee.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for pets to be left behind, even those considered valued family members and an essential source of companionship and comfort. Without access to resources that can provide information and assistance with the eviction process and/or finding pet-friendly housing to move to before an eviction, low-income Marylanders are left struggling to understand the eviction process and their rights as the process quickly moves along. Finding new housing, particularly pet-friendly housing, under these circumstances can be so tricky that a low-income person without information or transportation to move their pet to a safe place may feel they have no other option but to leave without their pet(s). The pets ultimately left behind are by no means only dogs and cats. They include rabbits, gerbils, hamsters, birds, and more.

**EXECUTIVE STAFF**

**Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr., Esq.**  
Executive Director

**Stuart O. Simms, Esq.**  
Chief Counsel

**Gustava E. Taler, Esq.**  
Chief Operating Officer

**Administrative Offices**  
500 East Lexington Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
(410) 951-7777  
(800) 999-8904  
(410) 951-7778 (Fax)

www.mdlaborg  
04.2021



MLA supports this Bill because it would set up a process to look for and keep safe those pets a tenant (caretaker) has left behind for one reason or another. By so doing, it prevents the suffering of those pets. By requiring that the caretaker be provided with the contact information for the place where their pet was taken, and requiring that the facility which has taken in the pet be provided with the contact information of the caretaker, the chances of reuniting the pet and caretaker are greatly enhanced. When pets are reunited with their caretaker, that makes space for another animal that needs to go into that shelter, reducing the likelihood of euthanasia due to inadequate space in a shelter, every opportunity should be taken to bring about these results. Therefore, MLA would recommend that in those cases where the property is returned to the landlord without the use of the judicial process, such as when a tenant's lease ends or is not renewed, the landlord be required to keep the "fact sheet" on hand and follow the same process that the sheriff, constable, or other officials, must follow, including contacting an animal shelter or animal rescue organization to take possession of the pet, providing that entity with the contact information for the caretaker, and if possible providing that caretaker with the contact information for the entity where the pet was taken. This makes it more likely that the pet left behind will be kept safe and not suffer.

Thank you for considering this written testimony. For the reasons stated above, MLA urges a favorable report on SB 816 with amendments.

Sincerely,

/s/ Donna B. Bernstein

Donna Bernstein, Esq.  
Housing/Consumer Staff Attorney  
Legal Aid Bureau, Inc.  
500 E. Lexington Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
410-951-7787  
dbernstein@mdlalab.org

**MMHA - 2022 - SB 816 - Favorable with Amendments.p**

Uploaded by: Grason Wiggins

Position: FWA



## Senate Bill 816

Committee: Judicial Proceedings  
Date: March 2, 2022  
**Position: Favorable with Amendments**

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This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members consist of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities. Our members house over 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA also represents over 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 816 (“SB 816”) requires housing providers to provide an animal shelter “fact sheet” to every resident that receives an eviction notice, regardless of whether the resident has a pet. Further, housing providers must provide the fact sheet to residents with pets at the time of lease signing. The fact sheet must also be provided with the summons for unlawful detainer cases, commonly referred to as “squatter” cases. MMHA appreciates the intent of SB 816, but MMHA is concerned by the significant practical issues and regulatory requirements established within the bill.

MMHA is concerned that SB 816 will result in negative, unintended consequences. For example, residents currently receive a significant amount of information during the eviction process. Just last year, the Maryland General Assembly codified a new notice bill into law. SB 816 requires yet another piece of paper be provided to residents during the notice process, which may result in confusion or missed information. **As a result, residents may not be aware of the separate eviction notice that includes important information, like the court date or information on how to avoid the eviction.**

On page 4, lines 1-3, the bill requires the fact sheet to be provided with every notice, regardless of whether a resident has a pet. On page 3, lines 27-29, the bill requires the fact sheet to be provided in unlawful detainer cases, which are commonly referred to as “squatter” cases. Based on the language in SB 816, MMHA is unsure of whether residents without pets and squatters who have no right to the property could make technical challenges in court by claiming that they did not receive the fact sheet.

Since residents receive multiple notices during the eviction process, MMHA’s experience is that animals left in properties are intentionally abandoned by the owner. **However, SB 816 establishes no requirements or accountability for individuals that abandon their pets when they leave a property.** With no accountability for an owner that abandons the pet and knowledge that a rescue organization will contact the owner in the future to attempt to return the pet, MMHA is concerned that SB 816 may unintentionally incentivize more residents to leave their pets during the eviction process.

MMHA appreciates the intent of SB 816, but MMHA is concerned with the significant practical issues and regulatory requirements established in the bill. To address concerns regarding additional information that may confuse residents or obfuscate eviction information, **MMHA respectfully requests that language beginning on page 3, line 16 be stricken down through page 4, line 3. For the aforementioned reasons, MMHA respectfully requests adoption of the amendment.**

**SB 816--AOBA--FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ryan Washington

Position: FWA



**Bill No:** SB 816-- Real Property - Actions for Possession - Pet Protections

**Committee:** Judicial Proceedings

**Date:** 3/2/2022

**Position:** Favorable with Amendments

The Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA) represents members that own or manage more than 23 million square feet of commercial office space and 133,000 apartment rental units in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

Senate Bill 816 requires the Maryland Department of Agriculture to develop and publish a fact sheet about the care and protection of pets in the event of an eviction or loss of possession of property. At the execution of a lease, a housing provider must include a copy of the fact sheet with the lease if the housing provider knows or has reason to believe that a resident owns a pet. A housing provider must include a copy of the fact sheet with written notice of an eviction proceeding for a failure to pay rent, a tenant holding over, and breach of the lease.

AOBA understands the need to provide shelter to pets that have been left behind by residents, but the bill assumes that pets are left behind as a result of an eviction. However, this bill will not address the issue of abandoned pets on properties. In members' experience, residents are well informed about the pending eviction and pets are not accidentally left behind but are intentionally abandoned if the animal remains in a unit after a resident has left. This bill does not rectify that situation.

AOBA members find it problematic to provide a fact sheet on what to do if evicted, at the time the resident is moving in. This sets a bad precedent for residents and housing providers as they establish a relationship at the beginning of a tenancy. Housing providers are in the business of ensuring their residents live in a safe, habitable, and friendly community where their experience is positive. Providing information about what to do when getting evicted, well before that is on the table, is contrary to that goal.

The language that mandates a housing provider include a copy of the fact sheet if they know or have “reason to believe” that a resident possesses a pet is vague. Residents may have a pet, but hide that from management to avoid paying the pet fee or have not declared it on the lease. AOBA worries that the resident can challenge the housing provider in court for failure to provide proper notice if they own a pet that they did not report to the housing provider and do not receive the pet fact sheet.

The bill requires housing providers to give residents an additional notice during the eviction process which is already overwhelming, in terms of residents’ stress and the volume of information presented to residents. Housing providers give residents information on available resources, the court date, and other pertinent matters when serving notice to a resident facing eviction. Adding the fact sheet on caring for pets during an eviction creates paper for a resident to review and they may overlook other vital information.

**To rectify these concerns with SB 816, AOBA supports amendments that will strike language on page, 3 line 16 through page 4, line 3.**

**For these reasons, AOBA requests a favorable with amendments report on SB 816.**

For further information, contact Ryan Washington, AOBA Government Affairs Manager, at 202-770-7713 or [rwashington@aoba-metro.org](mailto:rwashington@aoba-metro.org).

**sb816.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sara Elalamy

Position: UNF



**MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE**  
**GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

Hon. Joseph M. Getty  
Chief Judge

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**FROM:** Legislative Committee  
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.  
410-260-1523  
**RE:** Senate Bill 816  
Real Property – Actions for Possession – Pet Protections  
**DATE:** February 23, 2022  
(3/2)  
**POSITION:** Oppose, as drafted

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The Maryland Judiciary opposes Senate Bill 816, as drafted. Senate Bill 816 requires the Department of Agriculture to develop, publish and regularly update a fact sheet on the care and protection of pets in the event of an eviction or other loss of possession of real property. The summons required to be provided under Real Property § 14–132 to a person holding possession of real property shall include a copy of the fact sheet.

The Judiciary has no position on the policy aims of this legislation but is concerned with the provision that requires a summons include a copy of the fact sheet noted above. A summons primary purpose is to provide notice to an individual that they must appear in court. Adding too much additional information to the summons may result in this notice provision getting lost as the individual may not see this notice with all the other documentation they must now read. This will have the unintended consequence of the individual not appearing in court. This fact sheet has not yet been created so it is not clear how many pages the fact sheet will even require.

This bill would also create additional burdens on clerks' offices by requiring more documentation be included with summonses.

cc. Hon. Susan Lee  
Judicial Council  
Legislative Committee  
Kelley O'Connor

**SB 816\_realtors\_unf.pdf**

Uploaded by: William Castelli

Position: UNF



**Senate Bill 816 – Real Property – Actions for Possession – Pet Protections**

**Position: Unfavorable**

The Maryland REALTORS® opposes SB 816 which can potentially delay evictions due to abandoned pets on the property.

Although the REALTORS® do not oppose notice of information and resources to tenants regarding how to take care of pets when facing eviction, the other part of the legislation creates uncertainty about the ability to evict if a pet is abandoned and a tenant is not there to pick up the pet. SB 816 states that the sheriff or public official overseeing the eviction would need to contact an animal rescue organization and that the pet could not be left on the curb.

Sheriffs often won't know if a pet is on the property which would force them to call an animal welfare organization on the day of the eviction. Because the pet could not be left outside, the ability to proceed with the eviction could be delayed or stayed until the organization can show up. Without an eviction of a nonpaying or breaching tenant, a dwelling cannot be put back into the market.

For these reasons, the REALTORS® recommend an unfavorable report.

**For more information contact [bill.castelli@mdrealtor.org](mailto:bill.castelli@mdrealtor.org),  
[susan.mitchell@mdrealtor.org](mailto:susan.mitchell@mdrealtor.org), [theresa.kuhns@mdrealtor.org](mailto:theresa.kuhns@mdrealtor.org);  
[lisa.may@mdrealtor.org](mailto:lisa.may@mdrealtor.org)**