



## MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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March 28, 2023

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee  
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.  
Re: Human Relations- Housing Discrimination – Service Dogs and Guide Dogs – SB 535 - FWA

Chair Barve, Vice - Chair Stein, members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. As the President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc. I am here to respectfully ask that the House Environment and Transportation Committee vote favorable with amendments for Human Relations- Housing Discrimination – Service Dogs and Guide Dogs – SB 535.

Maryland Votes for Animals supports the intent of this bill but would like it to be amended .so that the bill does not also create a new definition for service dog. The version of SB 535 that passed in the Senate is not only unnecessary and overly restrictive but also it creates potential legal problems. In the past, we have supported a broad definition and for the sake of consistency we strongly urge committee to use an existing/approved definition. The Attorney General's office offered the following: Service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition.

This bill would add the right—that is, that an individual with a disability who has a service animal has a right to keep it in the dwelling for the service animal's lifespan regardless of whether the service animal is still performing tasks for the benefit of the individual.

Thanks to Senator James for sponsoring this compassionate bill and urge a report that is favorable with amendment.