



Date: February 9, 2023

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Bill: Senate Bill 279

Position: Favorable

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.

Senate Bill 279 (SB 279) provides additional protections for the treatment of pets during eviction proceedings. It requires the Department of Agriculture (Department) to develop and publish guidelines on how to care for and protect pets in the event a person is evicted or loses possession of their property. These guidelines must include information on local rescue organizations and shelters.

Housing providers must offer a description of these guidelines to the resident upon execution of a lease, and where to find the guidelines on the Department's website. The bill imposes an identical requirement on the Maryland Judiciary to provide a description of the guidelines, and where they are published, along with a warrant for failure to pay rent or tenant hold over cases.

The bill requires the sheriff to inspect the premises for pets at the time of eviction and, if a pet is present, return it to the former resident or contact an animal rescue or shelter to take the pet. If the pet is taken to an animal rescue or shelter, the resident must be provided the name and contact information of the organization.

Lastly the bill prohibits a pet from being removed from the repossessed property and abandoned.

SB 279 was previously introduced as Senate Bill 816 (SB 816) during the 2022 legislative session. MMHA requested several amendments to SB 816, all of which are reflected in SB 279. MMHA truly appreciates the time and engagement from the sponsors as well as the advocates on this bill.

As such, MMHA supports SB 279, and respectfully requests a favorable report.

For more information, please contact Lauren C. Graziano, Senior Government Affairs Manager, at 518-522-3529