



2/8/23

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of S.B. 279. 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. 279 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 property owners 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. 279



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