

February 9th, 2023
Judicial Proceedings Committee
S.B. 279
Real Property - Actions for Possession - Pet Protections
FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee. My name is Alexis Prisco and I am a high school senior from Baltimore County, Maryland. Last year, I lost my best friend. He was a tan and gray tabby cat and his passing broke my heart. In an effort to raise my spirits, my mom brought home a one-year-old ginger kitten. His name is Simba and he quickly became my roommate, my alarm clock, and my shadow. Simba had been surrendered to the Maryland SPCA after his family was evicted because he was lucky enough to have parents who knew their rights and responsibilities as pet owners. While Simba has a warm home to sleep in, other animals whose families were evicted have been left on the curb simply because there is no existing legislation to ensure that they be given a roof over their heads. The passing of this bill would ensure that any animals whose family is evicted ends up in a shelter, rather than left in the building or stuck out in the cold.

S.B. 279 not only protects the safety and wellbeing of animals, it gives newly evicted families, who may not know where they're going next, one less thing to worry about. Instead of frantically calling every shelter in the vicinity, pet owners and the landlord would directly be given the shelter that their pet was taken to and its contact information. In addition to this information, the evicted family would be required to be given a fact sheet containing options for caring for their pet and information about local shelters to ensure that they best understand their rights and responsibilities as pet owners.

Although the rates of COVID-19 have been declining in the past year, the immeasurable damage left on the economy has yet to be repaired and Maryland's rate of evictions continues to climb back towards pre-pandemic levels with over 4,000 renters being evicted during the summer of 2022 according to an article recently published in the Baltimore Banner. As COVID-era eviction protection policies have begun to expire, this issue is in dire need of attention for not only the safety of the animals being evicted, but also the sanity of the family caring for them.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony and I urge the committee to issue a favorable report of S.B. 279.