



## MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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February 9, 2023

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 279 - 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 279.

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 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. Eviction numbers are increasing for the first time since 2019 as most of the local and federal evictions bans put in place during the pandemic are no longer in effect. 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.

Unfortunately, "best practices" aren't being done uniformly by landlords. They need to be codified. 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. This bill received a favorable vote in this committee last year and passed the House 130-1. Let's make 2023 the year that we pass HB 102 so that we don't separate people and pets!

Thank you to Senator Waldstreicher for sponsoring SB 279. I urge this committee for a favorable report.