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HOUSE PARLIAMENTARIAN

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Chair, Education and Economic
Development

Oversight Committee on Pensions

Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families

House Chair

Baltimore City Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB1192: Criminal Law – Animal Cruelty – Suspected Commission
by a Minor**

Bill Hearing: March 7th, 2023 at 1:00 p.m., Judiciary Committee

**Chairman Luke Clippinger, Vice Chair David Moon, and members of the House Judiciary
Committee,**

Last year this committee passed landmark Juvenile Justice Reform legislation, which ensured that our youngest children are not incarcerated except for the most serious crimes. That legislation was critically important, but it had the unintended consequence of leaving cases of animal abuse by a minor in a legal grey area. House bill 1192 is intended to help address that grey area without undermining the important goals of the juvenile justice reform work.

Sadly, young children do engage in horrific acts of animal abuse. These acts not only put animals in danger but are a cry for help by the youth. Minors who engage in animal cruelty are more than twice as likely to have suffered animal abuse or neglect themselves. Several studies have highlighted the link between children who have been sexually abused and then proceed to harm animals. It is vital that we are able to respond to acts of animal abuse by children with the proper services and supports. House bill 1192 allows Animal Control to deploy the appropriate social services entities and to keep animals safe.

No one wants to see these children placed in jail. These incidents are a clear indication of the need to intervene with mental health and other support. But without this bill, Animal Control Officers have little to no recourse available except notifying our already overburdened Child Protective Services division and hoping for the best.

Without this law, there is also no guarantee that our ACOs have the ability to remove an animal from a home without pressing criminal charges. While some jurisdictions have a civil removal process, it is not universally available and as a result, there is no clear process for getting an animal out of harm's way.

For these reasons, I strongly urge a favorable report on House Bill 1192.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie M. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Delegate Stephanie M. Smith