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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 9, 2025

The Maryland State Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 152: *Criminal Law – Crimes Relating to Animals – Convictions & Sentencing*

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

Under current Maryland law, anyone who abuses animals in violation of animal cruelty laws can only be charged once for animal abuse. Hypothetically, if law enforcement uncovered a 25-dog dogfighting ring being used four times in a week, they would be charged with one count of animal abuse instead of 100.

It is hard to contemplate how a human being could subject any living creature to such abuse, but the newspapers periodically report situations in which literally dozens of innocent animals have been horrifically treated. When we catch people engaging in such reprehensible conduct, we need to impose appropriate punishments. Abusing a single animal is bad enough; abusing multiple animals represents a pattern of such cruelty that a much stiffer punishment is warranted.

Senate Bill 152 resolves this issue by making every instance of animal abuse and every animal abused a separate charge. It states that each animal harmed in violation of the “Crimes Relating to Animals Subtitle of the Criminal Law Article will be a separate offense and that a conviction under Subtitle 6 will not merge with a conviction for any other crime based on the establishing violation.”

According to the Calvert County State’s Attorney’s office, the typical defendant in animal abuse cases has harmed multiple animals multiple times. Senate Bill 152 is a necessary change to that will better help prosecute and punish these depraved and senseless acts.

I appreciate the Committee’s consideration of Senate Bill 152 and will be happy to ask any questions the Committee may have.