



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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January 9, 2025

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Criminal Law - Crimes Relating to Animals - Conviction and Sentencing- SB 152 - Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, thank you for the opportunity to send testimony in support of SB 152. My name is Lisa Radov, President and Chair of 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 Criminal Law - Crimes Relating to Animals - Conviction and Sentencing – SB 152.

This bill would establish that each animal harmed in a violation of a prohibition against animal cruelty is a separate offense, that a conviction for a crime relating to animals may not merge with a conviction for any other crime based on the act establishing the violation, and that a sentence imposed may be separate from and consecutive to or concurrent with a sentence based on the act establishing a violation. Essentially, this bill would correct an error in the state code to ensure that in cases where an individual is accused of animal cruelty to multiple animals that charges can be brought for each animal, including felony cases like dog fighting or hoarding.

This bill does not create new penalties. It returns a tool to the toolbox that would once again hold perpetrators accountable for each animal. In these cases, we are talking about purposely inflicting the worst cruelty on animals and would be used only in the rare cases of these crimes on multiple animals.

Last session, this bill had unanimous support and passed 44-0 in the Senate. We appreciate the early bill hearing and hope that this committee will continue to move this bill forward.

I would like to thank Senator West for his sponsorship of this bill and urge a favorable report.