

SHANEKA HENSON
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 203
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3578
800-492-7122 Ext. 3578
Shaneka.Henson@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 0581
Civil Actions - Tortious Injury to or Death of a Pet
Compensatory Damages

Chairman Smith and Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce and provide important details regarding SB0581 - Civil Actions - Tortious Injury to or Death of a Pet - Compensatory Damages.

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Helson from the 30th Legislative District of Anne Arundel County, MD.

This bill has been before the committee in different postures in the past years. The intent of SB 581 is to address financial issues affecting pet owners who encounter unusual medical situations. For the most part, pet owners do not carry insurance on their companions – with most of the costs being paid out of pocket. However, in today’s medical world with veterinary medicine, treatment is often similar to that experienced by adults. And this treatment can take a catastrophic turn, if unusual situations occur.

Under current law, a person who tortiously causes an injury to or the death of a pet while acting individually or through an animal under the person’s ownership, direction, or control is liable to the owner of the pet for up to \$10,000 in compensatory damages. The current statute of damages cap went into effect on October 1, 2017.

SB 581 increases the maximum amount of compensatory damages that may be awarded to the owner of a pet, from a person or professional who tortiously causes an injury to or the death of a pet, under specified circumstances from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

In this bill, the definition of “Pet” only means a domesticated animal owned or under the care of a private individual. It does not include livestock.

“Compensatory damages” implied mean:

(1) the reasonable and necessary cost of veterinary care for a pet that was

injured and

(2) in a case involving the death of a pet, the fair market value of the pet before death and the reasonable and necessary cost of veterinary care.

I want to introduce two representatives to speak to this bill.

After you hear the testimony from those here today, I request that you give a favorable report to SB 581.