

J. SANDY BARTLETT
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Anne Arundel County

Vice Chair
Judiciary Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TO: CHAIR LUKE CLIPPINGER and Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Esq.

**HB438 -CIVIL ACTIONS – TORTIOUS INJURY TO OR DEATH OF PET –
COMPENSATORY DAMAGES**

Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Committee, I am Sandy Bartlett, from Anne Arundel County. I come before you today to urge you to vote in favor of HB 438, known in earlier sessions as “Buddy’s Law.” HB 438 changes the maximum dollar amount a plaintiff may receive for compensatory damages when their pet is seriously injured or dies by the hands of another. We have not increased the maximum available since 2017. At that time, we raised it to \$10,000. Given the high costs of emergency pet care, I am introducing HB438 to increase the maximum amount available to compensate pet owners for tortious injury or death of a pet from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

While it may be true that there are not many cases in which compensatory damages to pets run as high as \$25,000, an owner whose emergency pet care for an injury runs over \$10,000 is out of pocket for the balance.

Emergency veterinary costs vary widely based on location, type of animal and type of emergency. A trip to an emergency veterinary costs more than a regular veterinarian because of many factors. The facilities are open 24 hours 7 days a week. Staff works around the clock, and they are often paid more to be available beyond the workers in the daytime practices. These individuals have advanced training and skills. The facility has more advanced diagnostics and treatment specialists nearby or within the facility. These costs are passed on to the clients.

HB 438 does not guarantee that pet owners will receive \$25,000. The claim for compensatory damages must be substantiated, the same as in every other civil case. HB 438 raises the amount awarded to pet owners who can prove that the injuries to their pet were caused by another person or an animal under someone’s control, and that the injuries sustained by their pet because of the other person resulted in substantial veterinary bills or the loss of their pet.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable vote. Thank you.