



## Maryland State's Attorneys' Association

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**DATE:**                    **January 21, 2025**

**BILL NUMBER:**    **HB 89**

**POSITION:**            **Favorable**

The Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (MSAA) supports House Bill 89 and urges this Committee to issue a favorable report.

This bill corrects – in the view of MSAA – an interpretation of the Maryland Sentencing Guidelines issued by the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy by ensuring the sentence recommended by the guidelines, and available to a sentencing judge, in animal cruelty cases accounts for the number of animals actually involved. This bill passed unanimously in both the House of Delegates and the Senate last year, but failed to receive a vote in the opposite chamber in the final days of the session.

Courts still retain the ultimate discretion in sentencing on these types of cases – this bill does not impose a mandatory minimum sentence, or constrain a sentencing court's ability to impose a more lenient sentence if justified. This bill simply grants courts the tools necessary to adequately account for the true scope of a defendant's harmful conduct in sentencing if the court thinks it is appropriate, and ensures the sentencing guidelines will similarly reflect that scope.