TESTIMONY FOR HB0089 Criminal Law
Crimes Relating to Animals - Conviction and Sentencing

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Embry
Committee: Judiciary
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair
Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0089 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

HB0089 establishes that each animal harmed in a violation of animal cruelty laws is considered a separate offense and each animal is deemed an individual victim for sentencing purposes. It also specifies that a conviction for animal cruelty cannot merge with any other crime based on the same act. Yet, the bill clarifies that certain animal-related crimes do not apply to humane hunting or fishing activities conducted according to state laws.

MLC advocates for any legislation that raises the seriousness of animal cruelty. In hoarding situations, for example, many animals are harmed. This outrage should not be reduced to consideration of a single animal. And animal cruelty can be just as serious as other crimes committed and should be treated on a more equal footing. This law will serve as an important deterrent to such abhorrent behavior.

MLC stands firmly behind any legislation that elevates the seriousness of animal cruelty. In hoarding situations, for instance, countless animals suffer. This outrage cannot be diminished to the consideration of a single animal's plight. Moreover, animal cruelty can be as serious as other crimes committed and must be treated with equal gravity. This law will serve as a critical deterrent to such abhorrent behavior, delivering justice for every animal victim.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition wholeheartedly supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.