

OPPOSE BILL : HB0912

TITLE: Local Government - Trap Neuter Return Policies for Community Cats: Requirements and Restrictions

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

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Please OPPOSE Bill HB0912 which is well-intentioned but counter productive legislation that would harm both cats and wildlife

I have personal experience with the harmful aspects of all the following in my Neighborhood and my own yard and adjacent Park (Sligo Creek Park). If passed, House Bill 0912 (HB 0912) would do the following:

- Legalize the abandonment of vulnerable domestic animals (cats) by anyone claiming to be doing trap, neuter, and release (TNR), even if they are just feeding cats, without making any effort to sterilize them (We have personally witnessed this over and over in my neighborhood leading to an over run of our yards and adjacent park with both neutered and un-neutered cats and their offspring. "Caregivers" are considered people who just throw out food but make not other attempt to care for the cats it attracts.)
- Prohibit local governments from requiring basic measures like registration of those claiming to be doing TNR (even if they are not) or establish effective procedures for addressing resident complaints about roaming cats and their welfare, impact on native wildlife,
- Give negligent animal owners a free pass to abandon social "house cats" by claiming that these owned cats are part of a homeless colony
- Allow and encourage shelters and other groups to abandon social, perfectly adoptable cats—even those who may have been recently abandoned and have never spent a day outside
- Endanger cats, wildlife, and the public

While I don't have experience with people inflicting intentional harm on cats in my own neighborhood, it is concerning that HB 0912 also lacks provisions to protect the rights of those private property owners around the state who don't want cats on their properties and perceive cats as a "nuisance." Frustrated property owners may **often harm cats** out of frustration when their complaints fall on deaf ears.

This bill even goes so far as to prohibit localities from requiring colony feeders to register. Registration is a commonsense requirement that can help ensure that abandoned cats are vaccinated, sterilized, and provided with needed care. The Bill It would also restrict local governments from establishing procedures to protect cats who are perceived to be a nuisance.

Of concern to anyone who loves all animals and wildlife, HB 0912 also contains no language to curb, control, or prevent the undeniable threat that cats pose to wildlife populations, animals who are already under great strain because of human activity and environmental destruction and degradation. **Domestic cats are an invasive, non-native predator in North America, and they prey upon, maim, and kill small mammals and birds, regardless of whether they have consistent access to a food source.** Fragile native animals who are hunted by free-roaming cats aren't equipped to deal with such effective predators, and their unnecessary suffering and deaths have a negative impact on area ecosystems.

Maryland's wildlife and homeless and neglected cats need you.. Thank you for your willingness to act and for your compassion for animals. Please oppose Bill HB0912.

Kathleen Michels, PhD