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Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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The Senate of Maryland
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SB 37 – Service Animals

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 37 on this consensus bill.

I appreciate the wide range of support including the:

- *Department of Veterans and Military Families,*
- *Department of Disabilities*
- *The Veterans Caucus and others*

The bill does two things:

- 1) It updates the *program's language to be consistent in the*
 - a. *Veterans Service Animal Program,*
 - b. *Department of Disabilities Service Animal Program* and
 - c. *School Service Animal Program* to the standards in the *Federal Americans with Disabilities Act, and*
- 2) It also provides terminology clarification to safeguard the intention of the original legislation for the criteria for disqualification of a participant in the program that aligns with the *Federal Americans with Disabilities Act.*

I was proud to sponsor the *Veterans Service Animal Program* back in 2017 and it has been highly successful.

In 2020, the *School Service Animal Program* was created and modeled after the *Veterans program* which incorporated slightly different language.

Finally, the *Department of Disabilities Service Animal Program* that the General Assembly passed last year mainly incorporated the language in the 2020 version.

This bill standardizes the language in all three programs to the most appropriate language that aligns with the *Federal Americans with Disabilities Act*.

This bill is needed because words matter, and we don't want people to become ineligible for these services simply because of outdated wording.

I have worked with advocates and there is no opposition.

There is no fiscal impact.

For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.