

SB 360 - Criminal Law - Emergency Response Animal - Prohibited Actions Against

Position: Support

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 11, 2026

From: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Department of General Services (DGS) respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 360. DGS and the Maryland Capitol Police (MCP), which includes the MCP Explosive Detection K-9 Unit, are in strong support of this legislation to update and enhance the provisions in Maryland law that criminalize the harming of an emergency response animal.

SB 360 would ensure that the array of harms conceivably committed against an emergency response animal includes injury, harassment and intimidation, and serious physical injury or death. The legislation updates the statutory definition of serious physical injury to include disfigurement and impairment or loss of bodily function. In addition, MCP supports the bill's approach to providing increased penalties based on the severity of the harm to the animal.

The MCP K-9 Unit is comprised of six K-9 officers and their handlers. The Unit provides K-9 services not only in Baltimore and Annapolis, but also in and around state-owned and state-leased buildings throughout Maryland. The Unit also supports many other police departments across the state where bomb detection resources are needed. In addition, the MCP K-9 Unit works in close partnership with the Maryland Stadium Authority, scanning the stadiums for the Baltimore Ravens and Orioles home games. MCP K-9 officers and their handlers provide essential law enforcement and public safety services that are vital to the safety and security of citizens across Maryland and those who visit our State.

Throughout 2025, the MCP K-9 Unit participated in 147 community demonstrations and responded as the lead K-9 agency for 5 active bomb threats. In addition, the Unit conducted 4,485 K-9 scans, including:

- 987 patrol checks;
- 764 vehicle scans;
- 72 traffic enforcement scans;
- 281 VIP event scans; and
- 125 scans of unattended bags.

DGS and MCP support this legislation's comprehensive revisions and enhancements to criminal penalties associated with harming one of our MCP K-9 officers, as they are highly trained, greatly valued, and much-loved members of the MCP force.

For these reasons, DGS respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 360.