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Society of the United States and
Humane Society International

1255 23rd St. NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20037
202-452-1100
humaneworld.org

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Judicial Proceedings Committee

**SB360 - Emergency Response Animal - Prohibited Actions Against
FAVORABLE**

Humane World for Animals, on behalf of our supporters across Maryland, respectfully urges a favorable report for SB360. This bill aims to strengthen protections for police dogs and horses, as well as search and rescue and other emergency service animals, by elevating penalties for acts of cruelty and intentional harm. Humane World for Animals works closely with law enforcement professionals nationwide on animal cruelty investigations and training and we consistently hear that stronger penalties for attacks on working animals are a necessary, practical tool that reinforces the seriousness of the crime.

There have been multiple troubling incidents in which working dogs were deliberately kicked, beaten, or otherwise maimed while performing their duties. These cases underscore a significant gap in Maryland law: despite the vital role these animals play in public safety, the code currently contains only a single provision addressing injury to emergency service animals, and it does not adequately reflect the seriousness of these crimes.

Police dogs, mounted patrol horses, and search and rescue dogs are highly trained partners who work alongside law enforcement officers and first responders in dangerous, high-stress environments. They locate missing persons, apprehend dangerous suspects, detect narcotics and explosives, control crowds, and protect officers and the public. An attack on one of these animals is not only an act of cruelty, it is an attack on public safety and on the officers who rely on them. When a service animal is injured or killed, the consequences extend beyond the animal itself: officers are put at greater risk, critical operations are disrupted, and communities lose a valuable public safety resource.

Emergency service animals serve Maryland with loyalty, courage, and dedication. They deserve legal protections that reflect their role and the risks they face every day. For these reasons, Humane World for Animals strongly urges the committee to support this legislation and ensure Maryland law provides meaningful, enforceable protections for police dogs, police horses, and search and rescue animals.

Stacey Volodin

Maryland State Director, Humane World for Animals
svolodin@humaneworld.org