



POSTION STATEMENT

Bill: HB 1568 Local Government - Animal Control - Dogs At Large (Dog Leash Laws)

Position: Support

Date: March 12, 2026

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Dear Chair Marc Korman,

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC or “the Commission”) has voted to support this bill.

What this Bill Does. Requires each county and municipality to adopt local laws prohibiting a dog from being “at large” and to establish related enforcement provisions. The bill preserves local authority over enforcement and allows jurisdictions to adopt more stringent measures.

Background and Purpose. The sponsors goal of the bill is to enhance public safety for people and animals by ensuring all jurisdictions maintain enforceable laws addressing dogs at large on public property.

The bill does not establish uniform statewide fines or enforcement thresholds. Instead, it requires local governments to adopt laws that include enforcement mechanisms while retaining flexibility at the local level.

Key Provisions.

- Requires every county and municipality to adopt a local law prohibiting dogs from being “at large.”

- Requires local laws to establish procedures for dog impoundment and civil and criminal penalties.
- Clarifies that the bill does not preempt local governments from enacting or enforcing more stringent measures.
- References the Appellate Court’s definition of “running at large” (Blitzer v. Breski).
- Effective October 1, 2026.
- Stakeholders, including SPCA and PAWS, provided input during drafting.

Local Enforcement Context.

- Existing Montgomery County fines generally range from \$100–\$500.
- Commission Park Police fines currently are:
 - o \$50 for a first infraction
 - o \$100 for second or subsequent infractions
 - o Subject to the cap in Md. Code, Land Use §17-208
- Park Police already have authority to issue civil citations and track warnings and violations.
- Park Police have indicated the bill could be enforced using existing resources without operational challenges.

Staff Assessment. Parks staff believe the bill is supportable, as it formalizes local authority and enforcement consistent with existing practices. Any necessary rule updates could be addressed during the Commission’s scheduled five-year Rules and Regulations update cycle (CAPRA). No immediate amendments to park rules are anticipated if the County updates its laws accordingly. Therefore, we urge this committee to vote favorably on this bill.