

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 114 (Delegate Long)
Environment and Transportation

Agriculture - Animal Shelters - Waiver of Adoption Fee

This bill authorizes an animal shelter to waive the adoption fee for a dog or cat if the adopter (1) presents a valid driver’s license or identification card indicating veteran status; (2) serves as a first responder; or (3) represents an organization that trains and provides service animals for persons with disabilities. “Animal shelter” is defined as (1) a county or municipal animal control facility; (2) an organization that contracts with a county or municipality for animal control; or (3) an organization that shelters animals and has received a grant from the Spay/Neuter Fund during the previous year.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill does not affect State finances.

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local government finances. To the extent county or municipal animal control facilities choose to waive adoption fees as a result of the bill, local government revenues decrease.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background:

Maryland Department of Agriculture Regulation of Animal Shelters

Animal shelters, as defined under the bill, are regulated by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) pursuant to Chapter 267 of 2016 and Chapter 409 of 2017. Under Chapter 267 of 2016, an animal shelter must establish and make publicly available (1) a

written veterinary care protocol; (2) a written protocol for reclaiming animals from the shelter; and (3) an annual summary of intake and disposition data. Chapter 409 of 2017 subsequently required MDA to adopt minimum standards of care for dogs and cats in animal shelters and requires an animal shelter to follow those adopted standards and the written protocol for reclaiming animals from the shelter required by Chapter 267. (MDA adopted the minimum standards of care in April 2018.) MDA, however, has no authority over animal shelters' fees or how their fees are assessed.

Adoption Fees and Fee Waivers

The Maryland Association of Counties advises that local animal adoption fees generally range from \$0 to \$150 with larger or more exotic animals having higher fees. Moreover, county shelters sometimes waive adoption fees for certain animals or for special adoption programs and events. For example, Anne Arundel County advises that it partners with the "Pets for Patriots" program. The program works with animal shelters and adoption facilities to link military veterans and their families with companion pets, with a focus on overlooked or undervalued dogs and cats that may not otherwise be adopted. Charles County and Frederick County also indicate that their animal control facilities waive or reduce adoption fees in certain circumstances.

Anne Arundel County advises that in calendar 2019 it processed 911 cat adoptions and 287 dog adoptions, with the maximum adoption fees totaling \$14 for cats and \$17 for dogs. The county also collects licensing fees from county residents who adopted/bought a pet from another organization. In total, the county collected approximately \$228,000 in adoption and license fees in fiscal 2018.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Agriculture; Anne Arundel, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, and Somerset counties; Maryland Association of Counties; City of Havre de Grace; Department of Legislative Services

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