



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

March 30, 2022

Environment and Transportation Committee

SB44

Crimes - Unattended Dogs – Extreme Weather Conditions and Heat

FAVORABLE

The Humane Society of the United States, on behalf of our members and supporters in Maryland, urge a favorable report on SB44, “Crimes – Unattended Dogs – Extreme Weather Conditions and Heat,” as amended by the Senate. Cases of dogs left outside in dangerous weather are one of the most reported types of animal cruelty, but the vagueness of Maryland’s current law makes it difficult for enforcement officers to act before a dog has suffered injury or death due to exposure. SB44 is very commonsense legislation, simply requiring that dogs are provided proper shelter when temperatures are below 32 degrees and have access to proper shelter or continuous shade when temperatures are above 90 degrees.

The burst of brutally cold weather this week have highlighted the need for SB44, as parts of the state have seen snow, ice, and record cold. Maryland’s law offers no protections for dogs left outdoors in these cases of severe weather. Extended exposure to brutally cold temperatures can result in frostbite and potentially deadly hypothermia. In summer months, heat stroke is a common cause of death for dogs. It is a common misconception that dogs’ fur enables them to withstand extreme cold better than humans. In fact, dogs of any breed who are exposed to extreme cold for long periods of time can and do suffer from hypothermia or death. Exposed skin like the nose, ears, and paw pads are highly susceptible to frost bite and can be permanently damaged. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recommends that dogs, even thick-coated artic breeds, should not be left outside during below freezing weather – and especially not without shelter that allows the dog to maintain normal body temperature.

SB44 has been amended in the Senate, compared to the cross-file version (HB16) that this committee already passed:

- Shade or shelter is allowed in hot weather, when temperatures are above 90 degrees;
- The definition of suitable shelter has been streamlined both to ensure that the requirements are clear and easy to comply with particularly for rural residents.

As amended, the law still takes a significant step forward to protect our dogs from extreme weather, suffering, and death. The bill will ensure that dogs left unattended outside in frigid temperatures have access to shelter that is insulated, protects them from the elements, and allows them to maintain a healthy body temperature. Allowing shade in hot weather will protect dogs left unattended in our summer months as the bill requires the shade to be readily available and fully cover the dog.

Dogs across Maryland are suffering and, in some cases, dying from exposure to extreme cold and heat. A definition of shelter that establishes minimum standards is essential. SB44 will protect dogs who live outdoors without creating an undue hardship for owners, and we urge a favorable report on the bill as amended in the Senate.

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