

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL SB0044 - FAVORABLE
Crimes - Unattended Dogs - Extreme Weather Conditions and Heat

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher,
and members of the Judicial Proceedings
Committee

FROM: Chris Apple
7001 Cradlerock Farm Court
Columbia, MD 21045
District 13

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I am Chris Apple, I live in Columbia in District 13. This testimony is in support of Bill SB0044.

For most of my adult life in Maryland, I have had neighbors who have left their dogs outside for hours on end - in oppressive heat, in the cold and snow, and even long into the night when temperatures are at their lowest. These dogs had no access to shelter, and when I called animal control for assistance they tried to help, but told me their ability was limited.

Those dogs I saw are especially vulnerable, because they are routinely neglected. They cannot advocate for themselves. This bill will clearly identify a baseline level of humane treatment for these animals, and ensure that no one in Maryland can mistreat a dog due to vague statutes. It establishes clear guidelines that are easy for laypeople to understand, and easy to enforce.

This law will prevent injury to the animals, because animal control will be able to step in *before* the dog suffers heat exhaustion or hypothermia. Exposure is a common cause of death for dogs, especially in summer. Similar laws have already enjoyed results. Last year, Talbot County's Chief Animal Control Officer testified that injuries from exposure were reduced when Talbot County adopted a similar ordinance.

Animals left in extreme conditions are often in more distress than their owners realize. While providing shelter may be a minor inconvenience to pet owners, that inconvenience might actually save the animal's life. Other Maryland statutes provide similar baselines for humane treatment of animals. These laws exist with the understanding that animal owners must adhere to a universal standard of care, even if that standard differs from the owners' personal definition of "humane treatment."

I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for SB0044, to protect routinely neglected dogs, and ensure all dogs in Maryland are treated humanely.