

CALVIN BALL  
County Executive



LISA D. MYERS  
Chief of Police

## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

**DATE:** December 15, 2020

**FROM:** Lisa Myers, Chief of Police *AM*

**TO:** Lonnie Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer

**SUBJECT:** Testimony and Fiscal Analysis on Legislation Authorizing the License Inspection of Private Animal Shelters

This legislation authorizes the inspection and licensing of privately run animal shelters within Howard County. It sets forth specific criteria for the housing and care of animals. It allows for our Animal Control Division to be proactive, working closely with private organizations that house a large number of domestic animals.

Currently our Animal Control Division can only inspect these types of organizations when, and if, they receive citizen complaints. Often these complaints are only received after conditions within a facility has deteriorated to extremely cruel situations.

Situations such as this have resulted in a large and sudden impound of animals in poor physical and mental condition. These large impoundments exhaust the resources of Animal Control. The costs to the County are in the thousands of dollars. You may recall the January 2020 complaint on Pinky's Playhouse, a cat welfare organization, which resulted in multiple cruelty violations where the animals were living in unsanitary conditions without any heat source. Most people are familiar with the May 2019 search warrant executed at the Animal Welfare Society of Howard County, which resulted in the impoundment of 165 animals who were kept in deplorable conditions.

The criteria set forth in this bill mirrors language in a similar Maryland state bill passed in 2017 that requires the licensing and inspection of municipally operated animal control facilities. The State bill set an annual licensing fee of \$100 with inspections completed by the Maryland Department of Agriculture/Board of Veterinarian Medical Examiners.

In a separate fee resolution, we are recommending a nonrefundable \$50 application fee and a \$50 license fee. We anticipate waiving the application and license fees in the first year to foster a spirit of partnership with the existing private shelters. The forgone fee revenue in the first year is about \$1,000. We expect the license fee in subsequent years to generate about \$500 annually. We anticipate handling inspection services with existing personnel.

By legislating minimum standards and County-based inspections as a condition of operation, this bill will help us prevent animal suffering, avoid costly impounds and promote the health and care of domestic animals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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