



**Office of the County Executive
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ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OFFICE

Legislative and Fiscal Summary of Administration Legislation

To: Members, Anne Arundel County Council

From: Ethan Hunt, Director of Government Affairs /s/

Date: March 17, 2025

Subject: Bill No. 25-25 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Branches of County Government – Executive Branch – Public Safety – Department of Animal Services – Boards, Commissions, and Similar Bodies – Animal Welfare Council – Personnel – Exempt Service – Public Ethics – Financial Disclosure – Director of Animal Services

This summary was prepared by the Anne Arundel County Government Relations Office for use by members of the Anne Arundel County Council during consideration of Bill No. 25-25.

Summary

This legislation, brought at the request of the Administration, creates the Department of Animal Services as a standalone department, separate from the Police Department. Currently Animal Care and Control (ACC) is responsible for enforcing local and state laws, responding to animal-related complaints, conducting investigations regarding animal cruelty, investigating public safety concerns pertaining to animals, and providing temporary housing for animals for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, for the adoption of animals. ACC is currently organized as an agency under the command of the Police Department, within the Bureau of Administration - Support Services Division. The duties of ACC will not change, but the Department will be separate and renamed.

Based on feedback collected from staff, animal care professionals, and other stakeholders since August 2024, the Administration determined it was in the best interest of the County and the operations of ACC to introduce legislation to elevate ACC to a standalone department in order to create some organizational autonomy while retaining government oversight of operations and policy in order to more effectively respond to the County's animal care needs. The new department will put shelter operations, enforcement, and updated licensing standards under one agency.

Before arriving at this proposal, County staff examined current operations and challenges,

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Note: This Legislative and Fiscal Summary provides a synopsis of the legislation as introduced. It does not address subsequent amendments to the legislation.

studied other organizational alternatives, and reached out to stakeholders and animal care experts for feedback. Although there are a variety of organizational structures utilized across peer jurisdictions for animal care services, industry best practices support coordination of enforcement and shelter operations and a direct government oversight role. Additionally, creation of a standalone department will create minimal disruption to ongoing staff operations, and enhance partnership opportunities between the County and existing animal welfare organizations.

Currently, the duties of ACC are not necessarily aligned with the primary mission and objectives of the Police Department, creating hierarchical and reporting structure challenges. Elevating ACC to an independent department will alleviate these challenges, allowing the department to prioritize fulfilling its mission effectively and efficiently.

Upon transition, the new standalone department will absorb certain administrative functions currently managed by the Police Department. The Administration is evaluating these roles and the FY26 budget submitted in May 2025 will be aligned should this legislation pass.

The Bill also removes licensing for various categories to make government more efficient. Specific licenses removed include cats, pet care businesses, pet shops, grooming parlors, and chickens and ducks. References to petting zoos, including license requirements, are removed because “petting zoo” is not an allowed use under the zoning code. In addition several of the types of animals that are currently licensed are subject to zoning requirements so licensure by a separate department is duplicative.

Anne Arundel County Charter Section 503 provides for the reorganization of departments and offices within the executive branch of county government. It states in relevant part:

On the recommendation of the County Executive, the County Council, by an ordinance known as a reorganization ordinance, may create new offices, departments, bureaus, divisions or other units of the executive branch; [and] may reorganize, reassign or abolish existing offices, departments, bureaus, divisions or other units of the executive branch of the County government...

The Bill makes changes in several different articles of the County Code, consistent with the creation of a new department. In Article 2 - Branches of County Government, the Bill establishes the Department of Animal Services as a department within the executive branch, specifies that the duties of the department are those specified in the Code, and establishes the position of head of the department. Article 3 - Boards, Commissions, and Similar Bodies is amended to codify the Animal Welfare Council, originally established by Executive Order 15 in 2016. In Articles 6 - Personnel and 7 - Public Ethics, it adds the director as an exempt position in the county service and requires that they file an annual financial disclosure. Article 12 - Public Safety, Title 4, Subtitle 1 is amended to update definitions and provide consistency with Article 18 - Zoning, and to allow the Director to modify licensing fees, with the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer, and 30 days notice and an opportunity for public comment, provided that any increase which is the greater of \$1.00 or 5% shall be approved by the County Council, similar to other fee provisions in the County Code. Subtitle 2, which concerns the Animal Matters Commission,

retains the Chief of Police or their designee as a member of the Commission, and requires the Department to provide staff for the Commission. Subtitle 6 - Rabies Control is amended to include ferrets, which are legally required to be vaccinated against rabies pursuant to Md. Code Regs. 10.06.02.10 - Vaccination of Animals. Subtitle 7 - Animal Licenses is amended to place all licensing functions related to animals within the Department. Subtitle 8 - Standards for Care and Keeping of Animals, is amended to remove petting zoos, which are not licensed and not a permitted use in the County Zoning Code, as there do not appear to be any as nonconforming uses and such operations are most often seen as part of agritourism or some other farm use. Subtitle 9 - Miscellaneous Provisions is amended to require that a person who finds a stray dog or cat deliver that animal to Animal Services within 72 hours, rather than 24, which is based on national standards as individuals often try to reunite animals with their owners first.

Purpose

This legislation creates the Department of Animal Services as a department separate from the Police Department. This Bill also simplifies and removes various licensure requirements for certain types of animals kept as pets and businesses that provide services to animals.

Fiscal Impact

Please see the Fiscal Note the Budget Office has prepared for an explanation of the fiscal impact of this Bill.

Additional Information

The Government Relations Office is available to answer any additional questions regarding this Bill. Specific questions should be directed to Lori L. Blair Klasmeier, Office of Law, Hannah Dier, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, or Claudia Roll, Animal Care & Control Administrator. Thank you.

cc: The Honorable Steuart Pittman, County Executive
Christine Anderson, Chief Administrative Officer
Jenny Proebstle, Chief of Staff
Gregory Swain, County Attorney