



Allegheny County Council

County of Allegheny
436 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Phone (412) 350-6490
Fax (412) 350-6499

Legislation Text

File #: 9442-16, **Version:** 1

Motion of the Council of Allegheny County urging the General Assembly and Governor to enact House Bill 113, an Act amending Title 18 (Crimes and Offenses) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, providing for the grading of the offense of cruelty to animals and introduced on January 21, 2015, with all deliberate speed.

Whereas, the criminal offenses constituting cruelty to animals are currently defined pursuant to the existing provisions of 18 Pa.C.S.A. §5511; and

Whereas, the vast majority of these offenses are graded as summary offenses under the existing provisions of §5511; and

Whereas, perhaps the most significant offense involving animal cruelty - killing or maiming a domestic animal belonging to someone else - is currently graded as a misdemeanor of the second degree, regardless of the number of times that the offense is committed, under the existing language of §5511; and

Whereas, there appears to be a clear link between animal cruelty and violent offenses committed against people, with one study finding that, in families under supervision due to physical abuse of their children, pet abuse was also present in 88% of those families (Broidy, L. M., Nagin, D. S., Tremblay, R. E., Bates, J. E., Brame, B., Dodge, K., Fergusson, D., Horwood, J., Loeber, R., Laird, R., Lynam, D., Moffitt, T., Petitt, G. S., & Vitario, F. (2003). "Developmental trajectories of childhood disruptive behaviors and adolescent delinquency: A six site cross national replication." *Development and Psychopathology*, 39(2), 222-245); and

Whereas, of 36 convicted multiple murderers questioned in another study, 46% admitted committing acts of animal torture as adolescents (Cohen, W. (1996). Congressional Register, 142(141), Oct. 3); and

Whereas, a 2001-2004 study by the Chicago Police Department "revealed a startling propensity for offenders charged with crimes against animals to commit other violent offenses toward human victims...." and found that, of those arrested for animal crimes, 65% had been arrested for battery against another person (Degenhardt, B. 2005. *Statistical Summary of Offenders Charged with Crimes against Companion Animals July 2001-July 2005*. Report from the Chicago Police Department); and

Whereas, 23 states and the District of Columbia have recognized the existence of this link between animal cruelty and domestic violence and have enacted provisions including animals within or protecting animals from domestic violence as of 2013; and

Whereas, the federal government has also signaled a desire to be more proactive in quantifying animal cruelty offenses, with the Federal Bureau of Investigation including animal cruelty offenses in its Uniform Crime Report as of January 2016; and

Whereas, it is accordingly the judgment of Council that providing more significant penalties for cruelty to animals and for repeat offenders would function as a deterrent to the commission of multiple offenses of cruelty to animals, while simultaneously improving the accuracy and consistency with which these types of offenses are tracked; and

Whereas, reducing the incidence of animal cruelty by adolescents may also constitute a significant step toward reducing future violent behavior, as many clinicians agree that early prevention and treatment of animal cruelty is the key to stopping the cycle of violence, because as aggressive children get older, they are less responsive to therapeutic intervention (Kazdin, A. E. (1995). *Conduct Disorder in Childhood and Adolescence* (2nd ed.). Sage: Thousand Oaks, Calif. and Loeber, R. (1990). "Development and risk factors in juvenile anti-social behavior and delinquency." *Clinical Psychology Review*, 10, 1-42); and

Whereas, House Bill 113, introduced by Representative Dom Costa on January 21, 2015, would amend §5511 in order to increase the grading for various animal cruelty offenses within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania from summary offenses to misdemeanors of the third degree, and in order to increase the grading for second and subsequent convictions of the most egregious offenses to felonies of the third degree; and

Whereas, it is the judgment of Council that providing for increased penalties for animal cruelty in the fashion provided for by House Bill 113 will inure to the benefit of the County's residents.

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS MOVED THAT THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Hereby urges the General Assembly and Governor to enact House Bill 113, an Act amending Title 18 (Crimes and Offenses) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, providing for the grading of the offense of cruelty to animals and introduced on January 21, 2015, with all deliberate speed.

IT IS FURTHER MOVED THAT,

Upon final approval of this Resolution, the Chief Clerk shall forward copies to the Allegheny County delegations to the Pennsylvania House and Senate, as well as the Office of the Governor.