

Extreme Weather Protection for Animals Emergency Amendment Act of 2017 Passes DC Council

Community 2017-02-08 10:04:38

Washington, DC – Today, at the DC Council's Legislative Meeting, Councilmember Brandon T. Todd (D-Ward 4) introduced the *Extreme Weather Protection for Animals Emergency Amendment Act of 2017*. The bill resoundingly passed the Council and, like all emergency legislation, will take effect immediately upon the Mayor's signature and expire in 90 days. It fills critical gaps in existing law that were exposed last month, when Momma, a pit bull in Petworth, was left outdoors in frigid temperatures for days, sparking a national conversation about animal welfare laws in the District of Columbia. Councilmember Todd announced the bill's passage at a press conference with the Humane Rescue Alliance at their facility in Ward 4.

"After the outpouring of concern from Ward 4 residents – and people all over the country – regarding Momma's safety and the inadequacy of existing animal welfare laws, I knew something had to be done," said **Councilmember Todd**. "Although I am currently working on legislation to address this problem permanently, I was concerned that dogs like Momma would suffer in the interim. That is why I introduced this emergency legislation to ensure that this winter, no dog in the District of Columbia suffers the way Momma did. Even as Washington, DC faces unprecedented levels of Congressional interference, important work at the local level must continue. It is our Government's responsibility to protect our four-legged friends who cannot protect themselves."

"We applaud Councilmember Todd in taking this critical step in strengthening DC's animal cruelty laws," said **Lisa LaFontaine**, President and CEO of the Humane Rescue Alliance. "We look forward to working with him and his colleagues on the Council as we strive to permanently improve our collective ability to protect animals."

The emergency law temporarily amends section § 22–1001 of the DC Code to define "protection from the weather" as "providing access to a shelter that is suitable for the age, condition, size, and type of each dog by doing the following: (A) accounting for the space needed for each dog, and ensuring that the space protects the dog from injury, rain, sleet, snow, hail, the adverse effects of cold, physical suffering, and impairment of health; and (B) ensuring that the shelter is raised at least 4 inches from the ground; includes a heat retaining, moisture wicking substance such as straw; and has a covered wind block."

These requirements take effect whenever the Mayor declares a cold emergency alert. Failure to comply with these requirements will be punishable by a fine of up to \$250, to be implemented by the Humane Rescue Alliance's humane law enforcement officers.

Over the coming months, Councilmember Todd will continue to work with the Humane Rescue Alliance, the Department of Health, and other stakeholders on a permanent piece of legislation to improve the District's animal welfare laws. That legislation – the *Extreme Weather Protection for Animals Act of 2017*, referred to by some as "Momma's Law," was introduced by Councilmember Todd on January 10, 2017, and has been referred to the DC Council Committee on Health. A hearing on the bill has not yet been scheduled.

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