



Fiscal Impact Statement for Proposed Legislation

Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

Senate Bill 261 (Patron— Stanley)

LD#: 26101240

Date: 01/06/2026

Topic: Cruelty to animals

Fiscal Impact Summary:

- **State Adult Correctional Facilities:**
\$50,000*
- **Local Adult Correctional Facilities:**
Cannot be determined
- **Adult Community Corrections Programs:**
Cannot be determined

- **Juvenile Direct Care:**
Cannot be determined **
- **Juvenile Detention Facilities:**
Cannot be determined **

** Provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice

* The estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 725 of the Acts of Assembly of 2025, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, fiscal impact statements prepared by the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission only include the estimated increase in operating costs associated with additional state-responsible prison beds and do not reflect any other costs or savings that may be associated with the proposed legislation.

Summary of Proposed Legislation:

The proposal amends § 3.2-6570 of the *Code of Virginia* to make it a Class 6 felony for any person to maliciously kill a dog or cat that is a companion animal, whether belonging to him or another. Currently, such felony applies only to a person who (i) tortures, willfully inflicts inhumane injury or pain, or cruelly beats, maims, or mutilates any dog or cat that is a companion animal; and (ii) as a direct result causes serious bodily injury, death, or the euthanasia of the animal.

Analysis:

According to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 and FY2025 Circuit Court Case Management System (CMS) database, 34 offenders were convicted of a Class 6 felony under § 3.2-6570(F) for the torture or mutilation of a companion animal causing death or serious bodily injury. In 28 cases, this offense was the primary (most serious) offense at sentencing. Of these, 35.7% received state-responsible (prison) terms with a median sentence of 1.2 years. Another 57.1% were sentenced to local-responsible (jail) terms with a median sentence of three months. The remaining 7.2% were not sentenced to an active term of incarceration to serve after sentencing.

Impact of Proposed Legislation:

State adult correctional facilities. The proposal amends § 3.2-6570 to expand the existing Class 6 felony to include the malicious killing of a dog or cat that is a companion animal. The proposal may increase the state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth. However, available data do not provide sufficient detail to estimate the number of new felony convictions that may result from enactment of the proposal. Therefore, the magnitude of the impact on prison bed space needs cannot be determined.

Local adult correctional facilities. Similarly, the proposal may also increase local-responsible (jail) bed space needs. However, the magnitude of the impact cannot be determined.

Adult community corrections programs. Because the proposal could result in felony convictions and subsequent supervision requirements for an additional number of offenders, the proposal may increase the need for state community corrections resources. Since the number of cases that may be affected by the proposal cannot be determined, the potential impact on community corrections cannot be quantified.

Virginia's sentencing guidelines. Convictions under § 3.2-6570 are not covered by the sentencing guidelines when the offense is the primary, or most serious, offense at sentencing. Such a conviction, however, could augment the guidelines recommendation if the most serious offense at sentencing is covered by the guidelines. No adjustment to the guidelines is necessary under the proposal.

Juvenile direct care. According to the Department of Juvenile Justice, the impact of the proposal on direct care (juvenile correctional center or alternative commitment placement) bed space needs cannot be determined.

Juvenile detention facilities. The Department of Juvenile Justice reports that the proposal's impact on the bed space needs of juvenile detention facilities cannot be determined.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 725 of the Acts of Assembly of 2025, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

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