



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

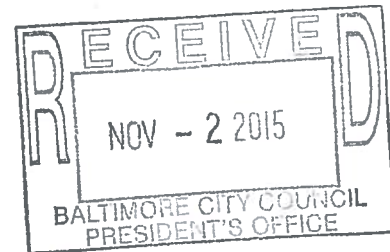
Kevin Davis
Police Commissioner

October 30, 2015

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Attention: Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

**Re: City Council Bill No. 15-0558
Animal Fighting Paraphernalia**



Dear Council President Young and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD or the Department) has reviewed Council Bill 15-0558. This bill would prohibit the possession, sale, transfer, or manufacture of animal fighting paraphernalia with the intent to engage in or otherwise promote or facilitate animal fighting. BPD is pleased to take a **favorable** position on this bill.

Animal fighting is a real issue in Baltimore. Last year, as a result of a year-long investigation by the BPD, an indictment was issued for twenty-two alleged members of a Baltimore-based dogfighting ring. The charging documents allege from the summer of 2013 through the time of the indictment, 139 dogs, mostly pitbulls and including 28 puppies, were recovered from individuals implicated in the indictment. Also recovered was a variety of paraphernalia commonly used to breed, condition, and train these dogs to engage in brutal dogfighting. These items included numerous treadmills, breaking sticks, heavy chains, conditioning harnesses, steroids, topical and injectable medications, dogfighting rings, surgical equipment, and breeding stands (also commonly referred to by dogfighters as "rape stands").

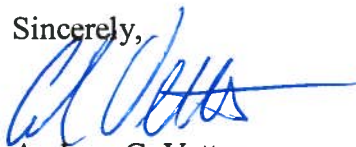
In addition to the despicable brutality of dogfighting itself, individuals involved in this illegal activity are often involved in other criminal enterprises. For example, 17 of the 22 defendants indicted have criminal histories, including 8 individuals for crimes of violence. Five of the 22 defendants have convictions for handgun violations, 2 have sex offense convictions, and one has a prior conviction for murder.

It can be difficult under current law to hold individuals responsible for dogfighting unless law enforcement officials catch animal fighting presently occurring. Council Bill 15-0558 will close that gap in the law by providing a criminal penalty when instrumentalities of animal fighting are discovered, and the intent to use those items in the training, preparation, conditioning or breeding of an animal for fighting can be established. Animal fighting has no place in Baltimore City, and Council Bill 15-0558 will help to fight this scourge on our communities. The BPD strongly urges a favorable report in this bill.



Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Department looks forward to working with the City Council on this matter.

Sincerely,



Andrew G. Vetter
Director of Government Affairs