

SENATE BILL 37

O3, O4, P1

6lr0608

(PRE-FILED)

By: Senator Simonaire

Requested: June 2, 2025

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026

Assigned to: Finance

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Maryland Service Animal Programs – Participant Disqualification – Revisions**

3 FOR the purpose of revising provisions related to the disqualification of a program
4 participant from the Maryland Children's Service Animal Program or the Maryland
5 Veterans Service Animal Program; and generally relating to the Maryland
6 Children's Service Animal Program and the Maryland Veterans Service Animal
7 Program.

8 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

9 Article – Health – General

10 Section 13–4101 and 13–4104

11 Annotated Code of Maryland

12 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

13 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

14 Article – State Government

15 Section 9–957(a) and (e)

16 Annotated Code of Maryland

17 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

18 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

19 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

20 **Article – Health – General**

21 13–4101.

22 (a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (b) "Eligible child" means a child who has a history of trauma, has been diagnosed
2 with post-traumatic stress disorder, or has been diagnosed with a developmental disability
3 and special health care need under Title V of the Social Security Act.

4 **(C) "DIRECT THREAT" HAS THE MEANING STATED IN THE FEDERAL**
5 **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT.**

6 [(c)] (D) "Fund" means the Maryland Children's Service Animal Program Fund
7 established under § 13–4105 of this subtitle.

8 [(d)] (E) "Nonprofit training entity" means a corporation, a foundation, or any
9 other legal entity that:

- 10 (1) Is qualified under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
- 11 (2) (i) Engages in the training of service dogs or support dogs for use by
12 children; or
- 13 (ii) Uses trained therapy horses for interaction with children; and
- 14 (3) Has been selected by the Department to provide services under this
15 subtitle.

16 [(e)] (F) "Program" means the Maryland Children's Service Animal Program
17 established under § 13–4102 of this subtitle.

18 [(f)] (G) "Program participant" means an eligible child who participates in the
19 Program.

20 [(g)] (H) "Successful Program participant" means a Program participant who
21 successfully completes the training or therapy protocol specified by a nonprofit training
22 entity.

23 13–4104.

24 (a) A nonprofit training entity may disqualify a Program participant from
25 participation in the Program if the nonprofit training entity determines that the Program
26 participant's involvement in the Program:

- 27 (1) Presents a danger to the Program participant's mental or physical
28 well-being;
- 29 (2) [Is] PRESENTS a direct threat to [the health and safety of] others;
- 30 (3) Presents a direct threat to the mental or physical well-being of the
31 service dog, support dog, or therapy horse; or

1 (4) Does not meet the training requirements of the nonprofit training
2 entity.

3 (b) A Program participant may discontinue involvement in the Program for any
4 reason.

5 **Article – State Government**

6 9–957.

7 (a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

8 (2) “Eligible family member” means a spouse or dependent of an eligible
9 veteran.

10 **(3) “DIRECT THREAT” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN THE FEDERAL**
11 **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT.**

12 [(3)] (4) “Eligible veteran” means a veteran who:

13 (i) is a resident of the State; or

14 (ii) receives treatment or care from a U.S. Department of Veterans
15 Affairs or U.S. Department of Defense medical facility in the State.

16 [(4)] (5) “Fund” means the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program
17 Fund established under subsection (f) of this section.

18 [(5)] (6) “Nonprofit training entity” means a corporation, a foundation, or
19 any other legal entity that:

20 (i) is qualified under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;

21 (ii) 1. engages in the training of service dogs or support dogs for
22 use by veterans; or

23 2. uses trained therapy horses for interaction with veterans;
24 and

25 (iii) has been selected by the Department to provide services under
26 this section.

27 [(6)] (7) “Program” means the Maryland Veterans Service Animal
28 Program established under subsection (b) of this section.

1 **[(7)] (8)** “Program participant” means an eligible veteran or eligible
2 family member who participates in the Program.

3 **[(8)] (9)** “Service dog” means a dog that is individually trained to do work
4 or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including physical,
5 sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.

6 **[(9)] (10)** “Successful Program participant” means a Program participant
7 who successfully completes the training or therapy protocol specified by a nonprofit training
8 entity.

9 **[(10)] (11)** “Support dog” means a dog that is individually trained and that
10 serves as an emotional support or therapy animal that a medical professional, within the
11 medical professional’s scope of practice, has determined provides benefit for an individual
12 with a sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.

13 **[(11)] (12)** “Therapy horse” includes a horse determined appropriate for
14 interactions with veterans by a stable licensed by the State that:

15 (i) is a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship,
16 International (PATH, Intl.) member center; or

17 (ii) has Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association
18 (EAGALA) certified professionals who provide services to veterans.

19 (e) (1) A nonprofit training entity may disqualify a Program participant from
20 participation in the Program if the nonprofit training entity determines that the Program
21 participant’s involvement in the Program:

22 (i) presents a danger to the Program participant’s mental or
23 physical well-being;

24 (ii) [has caused or may potentially cause harm] **PRESENTS A**
25 **DIRECT THREAT** to others[, an animal, or property];

26 (iii) presents a **[danger] DIRECT THREAT** to the **MENTAL OR**
27 **PHYSICAL WELL-BEING OF THE** service [dog’s] **DOG**, support [dog’s] **DOG**, or therapy
28 [horse’s mental or physical well-being] **HORSE**; or

29 (iv) does not meet the training requirement of the nonprofit
30 **TRAINING ENTITY**.

31 (2) A Program participant may discontinue involvement in the Program for
32 any reason.

1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
2 October 1, 2026.