

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE, No. 333

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 14, 2022

The Senate Environment and Energy Committee favorably reports a committee substitute for Senate Bill, No. 333.

This bill would prohibit a person who has been convicted of a criminal animal cruelty offense, for a period of time specified by a court, from: (1) commencing, operating, applying for employment, being employed, or volunteering at, or participating in any capacity in, an “animal-related enterprise,” as that term is defined in the bill; or (2) acquiring, owning, or residing with any animal. Any person who violates these provisions would be guilty of a disorderly persons offense. The bill would be designated as “Moose’s Law.”

The bill would direct the court, upon the conviction of a person for a criminal animal cruelty offense, to order the forfeiture of any animal owned by the offender and the transfer of the animal to the custody of an animal shelter, unless the animal is co-owned by a person who does not live with the offender and who has not been convicted of an animal cruelty offense. In that case, the animal is to be transferred to the custody of the co-owner.

The bill would direct the court to issue an order prohibiting the offender from acquiring, owning, or residing with any animal for: (1) a period of not less than two years following the date of the offender’s conviction for the offense, or following the date of the offender’s release from incarceration for the offense, whichever is later; (2) the duration of the probationary period imposed by the court for the offense, if that period will last for two years or longer; or (3) any more extended period of time, which the court, in its discretion, determines to be appropriate based on the nature and severity of the offense, the offender’s prior history of animal cruelty offenses, and any other relevant factor.

The bill would also direct the court to order the offender to refrain from commencing, operating, applying for employment or volunteering at, or participating in, an animal-related enterprise for a period of time, which the court, in its discretion, determines to be appropriate based on the nature and severity of the criminal animal cruelty offense and the offender’s prior history of animal cruelty offenses. The bill would allow the offender to petition the court to reduce the duration of this order.

Finally, the bill would amend N.J.S.2C:43-12, which establishes a Statewide program of Pretrial Intervention, to provide that there would be a presumption against admission into the program for defendants charged with animal cruelty offenses.