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AB 829: ANIMAL CRUELTY AND VIOLENCE INTERVENTION ACT

IN BRIEF:

Law enforcement, mental health, and animal welfare communities have long been concerned that current penalties do not always sufficiently address the root causes of violent crimes towards animals and that they do not adequately reduce recidivism or escalation of violence among animal abuse offenders. AB 829, the Animal Cruelty and Violence Intervention Act, expands the currently required counseling for those convicted of animal abuse under Penal Code section 597 to additional penal code sections pertaining to crimes against animals, as well as codifying that a judge may order a mental health evaluation and treatment if deemed necessary by the court.

EXISTING LAW:

Current law requires courts to order counseling designed to evaluate and treat behavior and conduct disorders for those who have intentionally abused an animal and are on probation for violation of penal code section 597. Several penal code sections pertaining to acts of violence towards animals do not mandate counseling.

THE ISSUE:

Over the past 30 years, researchers and professionals in a variety of human services and animal welfare disciplines have established significant correlations between animal abuse and violence toward humans. Despite the recognition of this correlation, current sentencing options for animal abuse crimes are largely punitive measures that do little to help end the cycle of violence or rehabilitate offenders. Fines, jail time, probation, and forced animal surrender are the primarily utilized options, but may not be enough to address the underlying issues leading to animal abuse. Appropriate mental health counseling and education are important tools that can benefit public safety as well as reduce offender recidivism rates.

THE SOLUTION:

Early mental health intervention is often the key to stopping the progression and escalation of violent behavior. This bill expands the penal code sections which mandate counseling for crimes against animals. The bill also gives judges the discretion to require a thorough mental health evaluation and subsequent treatment in lieu of the currently mandated counseling.

SPONSOR:

Social Compassion in Legislation (SCIL)

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