



## OFFICE OF SENATOR SABINA FLORES PEREZ

Chairperson

Committee on Environment, Revenue and Taxation, and Procurement

*I MINA'TRENTAI SINGKO NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN*

35<sup>TH</sup> GUAM LEGISLATURE

### PRESS RELEASE

#### Senator Perez Introduces PAWS Act to Update Guam's Animal Cruelty Laws

*Guam, July 29, 2019* – Today, Senator Sabina Perez introduced Bill 185-35, the Protecting Animal Welfare and Safety (PAWS) Act. The bill proposes a comprehensive updating of Guam's animal cruelty laws, and is co-authored by Senator Muna, Senator Moylan, Senator San Agustin, Senator Shelton, Senator Torres, Senator Taitague, Senator Marsh (Taitano), Senator Biscoe Lee, and Senator Jose Terlaje.

The PAWS Act improves three key areas of Guam's animal cruelty laws. First, the bill clarifies Guam's existing standards for animal cruelty, and includes a new distinction between animal abuse and animal neglect to more easily allow for citations of the latter. The bill adds new restrictions against bestiality and increases penalties for severe animal abusers who have a history of family or sexual violence. Exemptions remain the same as found in current law, including for self-defense, hunting, and cockfighting.

Second, the PAWS Act adds new pre-conviction processes, which include procedures for properly seizing abused animals and ensuring for their care. And third, the bill establishes post-conviction processes, which include provisions for community service, education, registration for felony convictions, and court-ordered mental health care and treatment.

"Bill 185-35 was developed to meet our unique, local needs. It incorporates recommendations from a number of stakeholders, and I look forward to receiving more input through the public hearing process," said Senator Perez. "The PAWS Act takes a comprehensive view of addressing animal cruelty. It clarifies different forms of abuse, improves the methods of seizing abused animals and ensuring for their care, and provides for education, therapy and treatment to aid in rehabilitating offenders," she continued.

Once adopted, the PAWS Act will also be called "Pugua's Law", in memory of Pugua, a Jack Russell terrier boonie mix, who was found shot to death in the carport of a family's Yigo home on September 27, 2018. The alleged shooter was arrested, and the case is currently ongoing.

"We are very supportive of this new bill, and we would like to thank the Senators of Guam and their staff for their support on this issue. We are hopeful that passing more comprehensive legislation will deter abusers and help raise awareness of the seriousness of animal abuse on Guam," said Alexie Mapson, owner of Pugua.

Pugua's case galvanized the community to rally against animal abuse. A number of high-profile animal abuse cases in recent years have also generated public outrage. In September 2015, two pet pit bulls, Lucy and Rex, were caught on video being severely injured after being picked up and



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slammed on the ground. In June 2018, an owned pit bull named Thor died from a painful, untreated 15-pound tumor. A lost pet Doberman named Sumo was found shot and killed close to home in Dededo on April 12, 2019, but the killer has yet to be found. And earlier this month, veterinarians had to euthanize a chained pet pit bull named Bruno found in extremely poor health, including end-stage heart failure, due to severe neglect.

"Our Animal Control Officers work hard, with extremely limited resources, to investigate and address animal abuse cases. Updating our laws will help my team, and our partners at GPD, GAIN, and the AG's Office, in improving animal welfare on Guam," said Director of the Department of Agriculture, Chelsa Muna-Brecht.

"Our laws must reflect our values in preventing abuse and promoting welfare of animals. Bill 185-35 takes a significant step in that direction," said Senator Perez. "Our laws must be updated to meet the expectations of our community," she added.

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