



**Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)**  
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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 28, 2023

**TO:** The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

**FROM:** Ann C. Fisher, Chairperson  
GACEC

**RE:** **Senate Bill No. 70 Animals in Protection from Abuse Proceedings**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed Senate Bill No. 70, which proposes to amend §1041 of Title 10 of the Delaware Code, adding language to include acts against a person's companion or service animal to the definition of abuse for protection from abuse proceedings. Council **supports** this amendment as it will extend protection to service animals and thus will afford victims of abuse who have disabilities with more protection from their abuser.

This amendment addresses the importance of animal companionship and the protection of both service animals and companion animals. Service animals are vital to individuals with disabilities and abusers attempting to use control over a partner may target a service animal. A 2021 study found that companion animals play a critical role in reducing feelings of depression, anxiety, isolation and loneliness. Victims of abuse may rely on companion animals to support them as they navigate through protection from abuse proceedings. Extending protection to companion and service animals will promote both mental and physical well-being for individuals with and without disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our support of the proposed legislation and our recommendations. Please feel free to contact me or Pam Weir at the GACEC office should you have any questions.