

HOUSE BILL 398

By Littleton

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37
and Title 39, relative to abuse of animals
committed by juveniles.

WHEREAS, the General Assembly recognizes that cruelty to animals by a child often leads to further criminal activity, sometimes homicidal activity, by the child as he or she ages; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly finds that, in certain extreme situations involving animal abuse by a juvenile, the ordering of a mental health evaluation should be required rather than authorized; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-14-212(j), is amended by designating the existing language as subdivision (1) and adding the following:

(2)

(A) Notwithstanding subdivision (j)(1), if a child is adjudicated delinquent for conduct involving the intentional torturing, mutilating, maiming, burning, starving to death, crushing, disfiguring, drowning, suffocating, or impaling of a domesticated dog or cat, then the court shall order that the child adjudicated delinquent receive a psychiatric or psychological evaluation and any recommended counseling and treatment.

(B) The court shall order that the cost of any evaluation, counseling, and treatment required under subdivision (j)(2)(A) be paid in accordance with § 37-1-150.

(C) If the court finds a parent or guardian to be in contempt of court for failure to comply with a court order issued under this subdivision (j)(2), then the court is authorized to punish the parent or guardian pursuant to § 37-1-158.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect July 1, 2023, the public welfare requiring it.