

Committee on Judiciary

CS/CS/HB 151 — Proceedings Involving Minors or Certain Other Persons

by Children, Families and Seniors Subcommittee; Civil Justice and Claims Subcommittee; and Reps. Brodeur, Moskowitz, and others (CS/CS/SB 416 by Criminal Justice Committee; Judiciary Committee and Senators Montford and Book)

This bill revises the authority of a court to authorize a person to testify in a judicial or other proceeding with the assistance of an animal. Under the bill, the court's authority is expanded to expressly allow it to authorize a person having intellectual disability to testify with the assistance of an animal. Those previously authorized to testify with the assistance of an animal include child victims and witnesses and certain sexual offense victims and witnesses.

The bill also specifies that a "facility dog" is a type of animal authorized to assist witnesses. However, the bill deletes references to "service animal" and retains references to "therapy animal." The terms facility dog and therapy animal are also defined by the bill. A facility dog is a dog that "provides unobtrusive emotional support to children and adults in facility settings" and that has been "trained, evaluated, and certified as a facility dog pursuant to industry standards." A therapy animal is an "animal that has been trained, evaluated, and certified as a therapy animal pursuant to industry standards by an organization that certifies animals as appropriate to provide animal therapy.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2017.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 116-0