

1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to care for retired law enforcement  
3           dogs; creating s. 943.69, F.S.; providing a short  
4           title; providing legislative findings; defining terms;  
5           creating the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs  
6           Program within the Department of Law Enforcement;  
7           requiring the department to contract with a nonprofit  
8           corporation to administer and manage the program;  
9           providing requirements for the corporation not for  
10          profit; providing requirements for the disbursement of  
11          funds for the veterinary care of eligible retired law  
12          enforcement dogs; placing an annual cap on the amount  
13          of funds available for the care of an eligible retired  
14          law enforcement dog; prohibiting a former handler or  
15          adopter from accumulating unused funds from a current  
16          year for use in a future year; prohibiting a former  
17          handler or adopter from receiving reimbursement if  
18          funds are depleted for the year for which the  
19          reimbursement is sought; requiring the department to  
20          pay to the nonprofit corporation, and authorizing the  
21          nonprofit corporation to use, up to a certain  
22          percentage of appropriated funds for administrative  
23          purposes; requiring the department to adopt rules;  
24          providing an appropriation; providing an effective  
25          date.

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Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 943.69, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

943.69 Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.—

(1) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the "Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program Act."

(2) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.—The Legislature finds that:

(a) Law enforcement dogs are an integral part of many law enforcement efforts statewide, including the apprehension of suspects through tracking and searching, evidence location, drug and bomb detection, and search and rescue operations;

(b) Law enforcement agencies agree that the use of law enforcement dogs is an extremely cost-effective means of crime control and that these dogs possess skills and abilities that frequently exceed those of existing technology;

(c) The service of law enforcement dogs is often dangerous and can expose them to injury at a rate higher than that of nonservice dogs; and

(d) Law enforcement dogs provide significant contributions to the residents of this state.

(3) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Law enforcement agency" means a lawfully established state or local public agency having primary responsibility for

51 the prevention and detection of crime or the enforcement of  
 52 penal, traffic, highway, regulatory, game, immigration, postal,  
 53 customs, or controlled substance laws.

54 (b) "Retired law enforcement dog" means a dog that was  
 55 previously in the service of or employed by a law enforcement  
 56 agency in this state for the principal purpose of aiding in the  
 57 detection of criminal activity, enforcement of laws, or  
 58 apprehension of offenders and that received certification in  
 59 obedience and apprehension work from a certifying organization,  
 60 such as the National Police Canine Association, Inc., or other  
 61 certifying organization.

62 (c) "Veterinarian" has the same meaning as provided in s.  
 63 474.202.

64 (d) "Veterinary care" means the practice, by a  
 65 veterinarian, of veterinary medicine as defined in s. 474.202.  
 66 The term includes annual wellness examinations, vaccinations,  
 67 internal and external parasite prevention treatments, testing  
 68 and treatment of illnesses and diseases, medications, emergency  
 69 care and surgeries, veterinary oncology or other specialty care,  
 70 euthanasia, and cremation.

71 (4) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—The Care for Retired Law  
 72 Enforcement Dogs Program is created within the department to  
 73 provide a stable funding source for the veterinary care these  
 74 dogs receive.

75 (5) ADMINISTRATION.—The department shall contract with a

76 nonprofit corporation organized under chapter 617 to administer  
77 and manage the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.  
78 Notwithstanding chapter 287, the department shall select the  
79 nonprofit corporation through a competitive grant award process.  
80 The nonprofit corporation must meet all of the following  
81 criteria:

82 (a) Be dedicated to the protection or care of retired law  
83 enforcement dogs.

84 (b) Be exempt from taxation under s. 501(a) of the  
85 Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in s.  
86 501(c) (3) of that code.

87 (c) Have maintained such tax-exempt status for at least 5  
88 years.

89 (d) Agree to be subject to review and audit at the  
90 discretion of the Auditor General in order to ensure accurate  
91 accounting and disbursement of state funds.

92 (e) Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently  
93 disseminate information and to assist former handlers and  
94 adopters of retired law enforcement dogs in complying with this  
95 section.

96 (6) FUNDING.—

97 (a) The nonprofit corporation shall be the disbursing  
98 authority for funds the Legislature appropriates to the  
99 department for the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs  
100 Program. These funds must be disbursed to the former handler or

101 adopter of a retired law enforcement dog upon receipt of:

102 1. Valid documentation from the law enforcement agency  
103 from which the dog retired which verifies that the dog was in  
104 the service of or employed by that agency; and

105 2. A valid invoice from a veterinarian for veterinary care  
106 provided in this state to a retired law enforcement dog and  
107 documentation establishing payment of the invoice by the former  
108 handler or adopter of a retired law enforcement dog.

109 (b) Annual disbursements to a former handler or adopter to  
110 reimburse him or her for the cost of the retired law enforcement  
111 dog's veterinary care may not exceed \$1,500 per dog. A former  
112 handler or adopter of a retired law enforcement dog may not  
113 accumulate unused funds from a current year for use in a future  
114 year.

115 (c) A former handler or adopter of a retired law  
116 enforcement dog who seeks reimbursement for veterinary care may  
117 not receive reimbursement if funds appropriated for the Care for  
118 Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program are depleted in the year  
119 for which the reimbursement is sought.

120 (7) ADMINISTRATIVE FEES.—The department shall pay to the  
121 nonprofit corporation, and the nonprofit corporation may use, up  
122 to 10 percent of appropriated funds for its administrative  
123 expenses, including salaries and benefits.

124 (8) RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.—The department shall adopt rules  
125 to implement this section.

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126           Section 2. For the 2020-2021 fiscal year, and each fiscal  
127 year thereafter, the sum of \$300,000 in recurring funds is  
128 appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of  
129 Law Enforcement for the purpose of implementing and  
130 administering the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.

131           Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.