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1
2 An act relating to care for retired police dogs;
3 providing a short title; creating s. 943.69, F.S.;
4 providing legislative findings; defining terms;
5 creating the Care for Retired Police Dogs Program
6 within the Department of Law Enforcement; requiring
7 the department to contract with a nonprofit
8 corporation to administer and manage the program;
9 specifying requirements for the nonprofit corporation;
10 specifying requirements for the disbursement of funds
11 for the veterinary care of eligible retired police
12 dogs; limiting annual funding available for an
13 eligible dog; prohibiting the accumulation of unused
14 funds from a current year for use in a future year;
15 prohibiting reimbursement in certain circumstances;
16 providing for use of appropriated funds for
17 administrative expenses; requiring the department to
18 adopt rules; providing an appropriation; providing an
19 effective date.

20
21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

22
23 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Care for Retired
24 Police Dogs Program Act."

25 Section 2. Section 943.69, Florida Statutes, is created to
26 read:

27 943.69 Care for Retired Police Dogs Program.—

28 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.—The Legislature finds that:

29 (a) Police dogs are an integral part of many law

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30 enforcement and correctional efforts statewide, including the
31 apprehension of suspects through tracking and searching,
32 evidence location, drug and bomb detection, and search and
33 rescue operations.

34 (b) Law enforcement and correctional agencies agree that
35 the use of police dogs is an extremely cost-effective means of
36 crime control and that police dogs possess skills and abilities
37 that frequently exceed those of existing technology.

38 (c) The service of police dogs is often dangerous and can
39 expose them to injury at a rate higher than that of nonservice
40 dogs.

41 (d) Police dogs provide significant contributions to the
42 residents of this state.

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

44 (a) "Correctional agency" means a lawfully established
45 state or local public agency having primary responsibility for
46 the supervision, protection, care, custody, control, or
47 investigation of inmates at a correctional institution.

48 (b) "Law enforcement agency" means a lawfully established
49 state or local public agency having primary responsibility for
50 the prevention and detection of crime or the enforcement of
51 penal, traffic, highway, regulatory, game, immigration, postal,
52 customs, or controlled substance laws.

53 (c) "Retired police dog" means a dog that was previously in
54 the service of or employed by a law enforcement agency or a
55 correctional agency in this state for the principal purpose of
56 aiding in the detection of criminal activity, enforcement of
57 laws, or apprehension of offenders and that received
58 certification in obedience and apprehension work from a

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59 certifying organization, such as the National Police Canine
60 Association, Inc., or other certifying organization.

61 (d) "Veterinarian" has the same meaning as in s. 474.202.

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

69 (3) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—The Care for Retired Police
70 Dogs Program is created within the department to provide a
71 stable funding source for the veterinary care for retired police
72 dogs.

73 (4) ADMINISTRATION.—The department shall contract with a
74 nonprofit corporation organized under chapter 617 to administer
75 and manage the Care for Retired Police Dogs Program.
76 Notwithstanding chapter 287, the department shall select the
77 nonprofit corporation through a competitive grant award process.
78 The nonprofit corporation must meet all of the following
79 criteria:

80 (a) Be dedicated to the protection or care of retired
81 police dogs.

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

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

87 (d) Agree to be subject to review and audit at the

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88 discretion of the Auditor General in order to ensure accurate
89 accounting and disbursement of state funds.

90 (e) Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently
91 disseminate information and to assist former handlers and
92 adopters of retired police dogs in complying with this section.

93 (5) FUNDING.—

94 (a) The nonprofit corporation shall be the disbursing
95 authority for funds the Legislature appropriates to the
96 department for the Care for Retired Police Dogs Program. These
97 funds must be disbursed to the former handler or the adopter of
98 a retired police dog that served for 5 years or more as a police
99 dog upon receipt of:

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

104 a. That the dog served 5 years or more with that agency;

105 b. Documentation showing that the dog served a total of 5
106 years or more with two or more law enforcement agencies or
107 correctional agencies; or

108 c. That, notwithstanding the length of service requirements
109 elsewhere in this paragraph, the dog served 3 years or more with
110 one or more law enforcement agencies or correctional agencies,
111 was injured in the line of duty while serving with a law
112 enforcement agency or correctional agency, and retired from the
113 agency the dog was serving with at the time of the injury due to
114 such injury; and

115 2. A valid invoice from a veterinarian for veterinary care
116 provided in this state to a retired police dog and documentation

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117 establishing payment of the invoice by the former handler or the
118 adopter of the retired police dog.

119 (b) Annual disbursements to a former handler or an adopter
120 to reimburse him or her for the cost of the retired police dog's
121 veterinary care may not exceed \$1,500 per dog. A former handler
122 or an adopter of a retired police dog may not accumulate unused
123 funds from a current year for use in a future year.

124 (c) A former handler or an adopter of a retired police dog
125 who seeks reimbursement for veterinary care may not receive
126 reimbursement if funds appropriated for the Care for Retired
127 Police Dogs Program are depleted in the year for which the
128 reimbursement is sought.

129 (6) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—The department shall pay to
130 the nonprofit corporation, and the nonprofit corporation may
131 use, up to 10 percent of appropriated funds for its
132 administrative expenses, including salaries and benefits.

133 (7) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to
134 implement this section.

135 Section 3. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, and each fiscal
136 year thereafter, the sum of \$300,000 in recurring funds is
137 appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of
138 Law Enforcement for the purpose of implementing and
139 administering the Care for Retired Police Dogs Program.

140 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2022.