

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

25 Section 2. Section 943.69, Florida Statutes, is created to

26 read:

27 943.69 Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.—

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

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

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

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

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

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

43 (a) "Law enforcement agency" means a lawfully established
 44 state or local public agency having primary responsibility for
 45 the prevention and detection of crime or the enforcement of
 46 penal, traffic, highway, regulatory, game, immigration, postal,
 47 customs, or controlled substance laws.

48 (b) "Retired law enforcement dog" means a dog that was
 49 previously in the service of or employed by a law enforcement
 50 agency in this state for the principal purpose of aiding in the

51 detection of criminal activity, enforcement of laws, or
52 apprehension of offenders and that received certification in
53 obedience and apprehension work from a certifying organization,
54 such as the National Police Canine Association, Inc., or other
55 certifying organization.

56 (c) "Veterinarian" has the same meaning as provided in s.
57 474.202.

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

65 (3) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—The Care for Retired Law
66 Enforcement Dogs Program is created within the department to
67 provide a stable funding source for the veterinary care for
68 retired law enforcement dogs.

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

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

78 (b) Be exempt from taxation under s. 501(a) of the
 79 Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in s.
 80 501(c)(3) of that code.

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

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

86 (e) Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently
 87 disseminate information and to assist former handlers and
 88 adopters of retired law enforcement dogs in complying with this
 89 section.

90 (5) FUNDING.-

91 (a) The nonprofit corporation shall be the disbursing
 92 authority for funds the Legislature appropriates to the
 93 department for the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs
 94 Program. These funds must be disbursed to the former handler or
 95 the adopter of a retired law enforcement dog that served for 5
 96 years or more as a law enforcement dog upon receipt of:

97 1. Valid documentation from the law enforcement agency
 98 from which the dog retired which verifies that the dog was in
 99 the service of or employed by that agency; and

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

101 or

102 b. Documentation showing that the dog served a total of 5
103 years or more with two or more law enforcement agencies; and

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

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

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

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

123 (7) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to
124 implement this section.

125 Section 3. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, and each fiscal

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126 | year thereafter, the sum of \$300,000 in recurring funds is
127 | appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of
128 | Law Enforcement for the purpose of implementing and
129 | administering the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.

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