

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to appointment of courtroom animal
 3 advocates; creating s. 828.035, F.S.; authorizing a
 4 court to order that a separate advocate be appointed
 5 in the interests of justice for certain civil and
 6 criminal proceedings regarding an animal's welfare or
 7 custody; providing that a judge's decision denying an
 8 appointment is not subject to appeal; authorizing an
 9 appointed advocate to take certain actions involving
 10 the proceedings; providing requirements for an
 11 individual to serve as an advocate; providing an
 12 effective date.

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

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 16 Section 1. Section 828.035, Florida Statutes, is created
 17 to read:

18 828.035 Courtroom animal advocates.-

19 (1) In any prosecution or other court proceeding under s.
 20 413.081, s. 843.19, or this chapter or in any civil or criminal
 21 proceeding regarding the welfare or custody of an animal, the
 22 court may order, upon its own initiative or upon the request of
 23 a party or counsel for a party, that a separate advocate be
 24 appointed to represent the interests of justice. If a court
 25 orders that an advocate be appointed to represent the interests

26 of justice, the court must appoint such an advocate who meets
27 the requirements of subsection (3). A decision by the court
28 denying a request to appoint a separate advocate to represent
29 the interests of justice is not subject to appeal.

30 (2) An advocate appointed by the court pursuant to
31 subsection (1) may do all of the following:

32 (a) Monitor the case.

33 (b) Consult any individual who has information that could
34 aid the judge or finder of fact and review records relating to
35 the condition of the animal and the defendant's actions,
36 including, but not limited to, records from animal control
37 officers, veterinarians, and police officers.

38 (c) Attend hearings.

39 (d) Present information or recommendations to the court
40 pertinent to determinations that relate to the interests of
41 justice, provided such information and recommendations are based
42 solely upon the duties authorized pursuant to this subsection.

43 (3) To serve, on a voluntary basis, as an advocate under
44 this section, an individual must be an attorney with knowledge
45 of animal issues and the legal system or a law school student
46 who has an interest in animal issues and the legal system and
47 who is certified by the Florida Supreme Court as a certified
48 legal intern in this state.

49 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.