

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 a cat or dog's welfare
 7 or custody; providing that a judge's decision denying
 8 an appointment is not subject to appeal; authorizing
 9 an appointed advocate to take certain actions
 10 involving the proceedings; providing requirements for
 11 an individual to serve as an advocate; providing
 12 applicability; providing an 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 a cat or dog, 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 the finder of fact and review records relating
35 to the condition of the cat or dog 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 that such information and recommendations are
42 based solely upon the duties authorized pursuant to this
43 subsection.

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

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51 (4) This section does not apply to prosecutions or
52 proceedings involving an entity accredited through a nationally
53 or internationally recognized zoological or aquarium
54 accreditation organization.

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