

By Senator Powell

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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:

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 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

30-00301-22

2022226__

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 these dogs possess skills and abilities that
36 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 in s. 474.202.

57 (d) "Veterinary care" means the practice, by a
58 veterinarian, of veterinary medicine as defined in s. 474.202.

30-00301-22

2022226__

59 The term includes annual wellness examinations, vaccinations,
60 internal and external parasite prevention treatments, testing
61 and treatment of illnesses and diseases, medications, emergency
62 care and surgeries, veterinary oncology or other specialty care,
63 euthanasia, and cremation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

30-00301-22

2022226__

88 section.

89 (5) FUNDING.—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

30-00301-22

2022226__

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

121 (7) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to
122 implement this section.

123 Section 3. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, and each fiscal
124 year thereafter, the sum of \$300,000 in recurring funds is
125 appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of
126 Law Enforcement for the purpose of implementing and
127 administering the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.

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