

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. The term also includes a
 48 correctional facility, as defined in s. 944.242(1).

49 (b) "Retired law enforcement dog" means a dog that was
 50 previously in the service of or employed by a law enforcement

51 agency in this state for the principal purpose of aiding in the
52 detection of criminal activity, operation of a correctional
53 facility, enforcement of laws, or apprehension of offenders and
54 that received certification in obedience and apprehension work
55 from a certifying organization, such as the National Police
56 Canine Association, Inc., or other certifying organization.

57 (c) "Veterinarian" has the same meaning as provided in s.
58 474.202.

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

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

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

76 criteria:

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

79 (b) Be exempt from taxation under s. 501(a) of the
 80 Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in s.
 81 501(c)(3) of that code.

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

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

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

91 (5) FUNDING.—

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

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

101 a. One or more law enforcement agencies for a period of at
 102 least 5 years; or

103 b. One or more law enforcement agencies for a period of at
 104 least 3 years, was injured in the line of duty, and retired from
 105 the agency due to such injury; and

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

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

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

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

125 (7) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to

126 | implement this section.

127 | Section 3. Effective July 1, 2022, for the 2022-2023
128 | fiscal year, the sum of \$300,000 in recurring funds is
129 | appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of
130 | Law Enforcement for the purpose of implementing and
131 | administering the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.

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