



# HOUSE BILL 1042: Vet Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs.

2023-2024 General Assembly

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<b>Committee:</b>	House Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	<b>Date:</b>	June 11, 2024
<b>Introduced by:</b>	Reps. Gillespie, Bradford, Greene, Logan	<b>Prepared by:</b>	Theresa Matula
<b>Analysis of:</b>	Second Edition		Legislative Analyst

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**OVERVIEW:** *House Bill 1042 would appropriate \$300,000 to establish the Retired Law Enforcement Canine Fund and would create a new Article 12I in Chapter 143 of the General Statutes to provide the criteria for reimbursement of veterinary care provided for a retired law enforcement canine.*

**CURRENT LAW:** G.S. 17F-21 allows for the disposition of retired service animals. This statute provides that upon a determination that any service animal is no longer fit or needed for public service, the State or unit of local government may transfer ownership of the animal at a price determined by the State or unit of local government and upon any other terms and conditions deemed appropriate. The individual to whom the service animal is transferred must agree to accept ownership, care, and custody of the service animal. G.S. 17F-21(b)(1) defines a "service animal" to include "any horse, dog, or other animal owned by the State or a unit of local government that performs law enforcement, public safety, or emergency service functions."

## **BILL ANALYSIS:**

**Section 1** of House Bill 1040 would create a new Article 12I, Retired Law Enforcement Canine Veterinary Care Reimbursements, in Chapter 143 of the General Statutes.

- The *purpose of the Article* (G.S. 143-166.90) is to provide for reimbursement of veterinary care for retired law enforcement canines in consideration of the hazardous public service rendered to the people of the State.
- A *definitions section* (G.S. 143-166.91) provides definitions for the following: "correctional agency," "law enforcement agency," "retired law enforcement canine," and "veterinary care."
  - A retired law enforcement canine is eligible under the Article if the canine retired on or after July 1, 2024, and prior to retirement was in the service of or owned by a law enforcement or correctional agency used for specified duties and had received certification from a nationally recognized organization.
- The *Retired Law Enforcement Canine Fund* (Fund) is established (G.S. 143-166.93) in the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the monies in the fund are non-reverting. DPS would be responsible for rules and can receive up to 1% of the monies received by the Fund for administration.
- *Application for reimbursement* (G.S. 143-166.92) from the Fund for veterinary care received by the retired law enforcement canine may be submitted to DPS by the owner of the canine. Veterinary care may be reimbursed for up to \$1,500 in a State fiscal year. The owner of the retired

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# House Bill 1042

Page 2

law enforcement canine must submit an application for reimbursement within ninety days of the date of the veterinary care received by the retired law enforcement canine.

- *Record keeping requirements* (G.S. 143-166.94) for DPS related to the applications include maintaining: all applications received, all application determinations, all funds disbursed.
- Other benefits provided for retired law enforcement canines will not be impacted by the new Article and owners of the canines are not required to seek reimbursement (G.S. 143-166.95).

**Section 2** adds a new subsection to current law (G.S. 17F-21) to provide that the terms and conditions outlined in the transfer of ownership of a service dog in accordance with the current law does not prevent the owner of a retired law enforcement canine from applying for reimbursement of veterinary care under Article 12I of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes.

**Section 3** appropriates \$300,000 in recurring funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year from the General Fund to the Retired Law Enforcement Canine Fund to be used in accordance with the provisions of Article 12I of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes/

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** The bill would become effective July 1, 2024.