

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

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HOUSE BILL 1042
PROPOSED COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE H1042-CSSHa-48 [v.4]
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Short Title: Vet Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

May 7, 2024

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO REIMBURSE THE VETERINARY CARE OF RETIRED LAW
ENFORCEMENT CANINES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Chapter 143 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Article to read:

"Article 12I.

"Retired Law Enforcement Canine Veterinary Care Reimbursements.

"§ 143-166.90. Purpose.

In consideration of hazardous public service rendered to the people of this State, there is provided a system of veterinary care reimbursement for retired law enforcement canines.

"§ 143-166.91. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) Correctional agency. – A lawfully established State or local public agency having primary responsibility for the supervision, protection, care, custody, control, or investigation of individuals at a State prison or local confinement facility within the State.
- (2) Law enforcement agency. – A lawfully established State or local public agency within the State having primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of crime or the enforcement of penal, traffic, highway, regulatory, game, immigration, postal, customs, or controlled substance laws.
- (3) Retired law enforcement canine. – A canine meeting the following criteria:

 - a. The canine retired on or after July 1, 2024, and prior to retirement was in the service of or owned by a law enforcement agency or a correctional agency for the principal purpose of aiding in the detection of criminal activity, the enforcement of laws, the apprehension of offenders, the detection of explosives or narcotics, or search and rescue operations.
 - b. The canine received certification in obedience, apprehension, explosives detection, narcotics detection, or search and rescue work, from a nationally recognized organization that certifies canines performing that type of work.
- (4) Veterinary care. – The practice, by a veterinarian, of veterinary medicine as defined in G.S. 90-181. For purposes of this Article, this term includes, at a minimum, each of the following:

 - a. Annual wellness examinations.



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- b. Vaccinations.
- c. Internal and external parasite prevention treatments.
- d. Testing and treatment of illnesses and diseases.
- e. Medications.
- f. Emergency care and surgeries.
- g. Veterinary oncology or other specialty care.
- h. Euthanasia.
- i. Cremation.

Veterinary care shall not include elective surgery.

"§ 143-166.92. Application for reimbursement.

(a) When a retired law enforcement canine receives veterinary care, the owner of the canine may apply to the Department of Public Safety pursuant to the provisions of this Article for the reimbursement of that care up to the amount of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) in a State fiscal year.

(b) When seeking reimbursement in accordance with the provisions of this Article, the owner of the retired 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.

"§ 143-166.93. Creation of Fund; management.

There is established within the Department of Public Safety the Retired Law Enforcement Canine Fund. All monies in the Fund shall not revert. Awards from the Fund shall be distributed in accordance with this Article.

The Department of Public Safety shall have the power to make necessary rules and regulations for the administration of the provisions of this Article and shall have the authority to use up to one percent (1%) of monies received by the Retired Law Enforcement Canine Fund for the purpose of administering the Fund. The Department of Public Safety shall be vested with the power to make all determinations necessary for the administration of this Article and all of its decisions and determinations shall be final and conclusive and not subject to review or reversal except by the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety or the Secretary's designee.

"§ 143-166.94. Record Keeping.

In relation to applications received under this Article, the Department of Public Safety shall keep a record of the following:

- (1) All applications received.
- (2) All application determinations.
- (3) All funds disbursed.

"§ 143-166.95. Other benefits not affected; elective participation.

(a) No other benefits now provided for retired law enforcement canines shall be affected by the provisions of this Article, and the benefits provided for in this Article shall not be diminished, abated, or otherwise affected by the provision of benefits to retired law enforcement canines under any other provision of law.

(b) Owners of retired law enforcement canines are not required to seek reimbursement for veterinary care under this Article and the failure to seek that reimbursement in a given year shall not preclude an owner from seeking future reimbursement under this Article."

SECTION 2. G.S. 17F-21 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(c) The terms and conditions outlined in the transfer of ownership of a service dog, as referenced in subsection (a) of this section, shall not prevent the owner of a retired law enforcement canine from applying for reimbursement of veterinary care for a retired law enforcement canine in accordance with Article 12I of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes."

SECTION 3. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Retired Law Enforcement Canine Fund the sum of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) in recurring

- 1 funds for the 2024-2025 fiscal year to be used in accordance with the provisions of Article 12I
2 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, as enacted by this act.
3 **SECTION 4.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2024.