

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-SIX

—
H.P. 1396 - L.D. 2081

An Act to Provide Health Care Cost Reimbursement for Retired Law Enforcement Canines

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 25 MRSA c. 203 is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 203

RETIRED LAW ENFORCEMENT CANINE HEALTH CARE

§1821. Health care cost reimbursement for retired law enforcement canines

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Agency head" means the chief official of a state law enforcement agency, including, but not limited to, the Chief of the State Police, the State Fire Marshal, the Game Warden Colonel or the Commissioner of Public Safety.

B. "Applicant" means a handler of a retired law enforcement canine or an individual who adopts a retired law enforcement canine.

C. "Law enforcement canine" means a canine that has been:

(1) Certified by a nationally recognized or state-recognized law enforcement canine certification organization; and

(2) Trained and actively deployed in a law enforcement capacity by a state law enforcement agency.

D. "Retired law enforcement canine" means a law enforcement canine that no longer serves in active law enforcement duty and:

(1) Served a minimum of 5 years in active law enforcement duty with one or more state law enforcement agencies; or

(2) Served less than 5 years in active law enforcement duty with one or more state law enforcement agencies and was retired from service due to a medical condition diagnosed by a veterinarian licensed in accordance with Title 32, section 4860 and approved by the canine's last employing agency head.

2. Retired Law Enforcement K-9 Health Care Fund. The Retired Law Enforcement K-9 Health Care Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," is established in and administered by the Department of Public Safety. The fund must be held separate and apart from all other money, funds and accounts. Interest earned by the fund must be credited to the fund. Any unexpended balances remaining in the fund at the end of any fiscal year do not lapse and must be carried forward to the next fiscal year.

A. The fund must be used to reimburse applicants for veterinary health care costs for eligible retired law enforcement canines. Reimbursable services include:

(1) Routine preventive care;

(2) Treatment of illness or injury; and

(3) Medications and surgical procedures necessary to maintain the retired law enforcement canine's quality of life.

B. Reimbursement is limited to \$5,000 per eligible law enforcement canine for the life of the canine, subject to available appropriations and submittal of documentation required under subsections 3 and 4. An agency head may, at the agency head's sole discretion, provide additional reimbursement from the agency's legislatively authorized budget, including, but not limited to, a designated subfund or line-item allocation. There is no limit on the amount a law enforcement agency may reimburse from its own funds.

3. Eligibility. To qualify for reimbursement under this section:

A. A canine must be a retired law enforcement canine;

B. The applicant must reside in the State;

C. The canine may not be in active service with any state or local law enforcement agency; and

D. A completed application must be submitted to the Department of Public Safety that includes:

(1) A diagnosis by a veterinarian licensed in accordance with Title 32, section 4860; and

(2) Proof of veterinary expenses incurred.

4. Funding sources. The fund consists of:

A. Appropriations and allocations from the Legislature;

B. Contributions from private sources, including donations, grants and endowments; and

C. Fines or fees collected by state law enforcement agencies and allocated by the Legislature.

If appropriations and allocations from the Legislature are insufficient, a law enforcement agency may use funds from its legislatively authorized budget, including agency-specific subfunds or designated line-item allocations, to reimburse veterinary expenses for a retired law enforcement canine that served in that agency. Such a reimbursement is at the sole discretion of the agency head.

5. Rulemaking. The Commissioner of Public Safety shall adopt rules to implement this section. The rules must:

- A. Establish reimbursement guidelines;
- B. Establish application procedures;
- C. Ensure equitable distribution of funds; and
- D. Identify procedures for maintaining records of disbursements.

Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

PUBLIC SAFETY, DEPARTMENT OF

Retired Law Enforcement K-9 Health Care Fund N571

Initiative: Establishes the Retired Law Enforcement K-9 Health Care Fund.

OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS	2025-26	2026-27
All Other	\$0	\$500
OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS TOTAL	\$0	\$500