



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Allison Hepler presenting*  
**LD 1234, An Act to Provide Reimbursement for Health Care Expenses of Retired State Police Law Enforcement Dogs**  
*before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety*

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Allison Hepler, and I represent the towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich. I am pleased to introduce **LD 1234, An Act to Provide Reimbursement for Health Care Expenses of Retired State Police Law Enforcement Dogs.**

We have all seen law enforcement dogs in action – working in search and rescue operations, tracking down illegal narcotics, deterring criminal activity, and participating in cadaver searches. These canines are in service until around nine years of age, after which they are retired into the hands of their “handler,” who is the police officer who has worked with the dog during the dog’s service. They have been partners.

At that point, the handler becomes 100% responsible for the dog’s care. Retired dogs live about three to five years and can develop a number of conditions common to many older dogs, such as arthritis, knee, hip and back injuries. Working dogs – and these dogs have worked hard while in service to the state – would be at a higher risk for such injuries.

This bill requires the Department of Public Safety to reimburse authorized handlers of retired law enforcement dogs that were used in service by the State Police up to \$5,000 per year for health care expenses of their dogs. At any given time, there are about 12 retired dogs, which amounts to up to \$60,000 per year.

Many private entities already volunteer their services. For example, Elanco Animal Health and Idexx provide annual “wellness” clinics where active and retired dogs receive flea and tick medication, vaccines, as well as basic testing.

We are grateful to the people and companies that provide services for free. It is time for us to do our part. These dogs are state employees worthy of some of the services given to our human state workers. Paying some of the costs of their care seems like a reasonable benefit we can provide to these retired officers.