



Janet T. Mills
Governor

Michael J. Sauschuck
Commissioner

STATE OF MAINE
Department of Public Safety
MAINE STATE POLICE

45 Commerce Drive - Suite 1
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COL. Bill G. Ross
Chief

LTC. Brian P. Scott
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Testimony of Major Scott A. Gosselin
Maine State Police

Neither for Nor Against LD 1234

An Act to Provide Reimbursement for Health Care Expenses of Retired State Police Law Enforcement Dogs
Sponsored by Representative Hepler
Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and other distinguished members of the joint standing committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Major Scott Gosselin and I am here to represent the Maine State Police and the Maine Department of Public Safety to testify Neither For Nor Against LD 1234, "An Act To Provide Reimbursement for Health Care Expenses of Retired State Police Law Enforcement Dogs."

The Maine State Police K9 Unit is currently made up of twenty-seven Troopers, Detectives and Sergeants that maintain a primary duty of rural patrol, highway patrol, criminal investigations, training and supervision throughout the state. Our agency usually carries between 23 and 25 working law enforcement dogs. That number fluctuates as dogs retire and new dogs being trained for duty. Currently, our agency has approximately 8 dual purpose patrol/narcotic dogs. There are 5 single purpose explosive dogs, 2 single purpose cadaver dogs and 2 single purpose patrol dogs/tactical dogs. We have 6 more dogs in training (3 in narcotics and 3 in patrol)

The Maine State Police K9 unit was officially started in 1980. There had been canines used by Troopers previously, some dating back to the 1920's but the unit itself was officially recognized and instated in 1980 by Colonel Weeks. This was not an easy decision at the time. It was still fresh in people's minds how dogs had been used in large cities during riots and Col. Weeks didn't want the Maine State Police to have a similar image. Since that time, I think it is safe to say how Police K9s have won over the public in popular opinion.

The Canine Unit has countless successes over the years. Lost people and criminals tracked and found, narcotics located, evidence of crimes found, and remains being returned to their loved ones or processed for crimes. The list can go on and on. What can't be calculated is the individuals the canine handlers and their dogs have affected. School children and community members who walked away from a demonstration amazed at what a Trooper and their dog can do, children at the Barbara Bush and Eastern Maine hospital during the holidays who just enjoyed patting a real police canine and even those with ill intentions where the presence of a skilled canine deterred them.



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A well-trained canine is a force multiplier and it's a resource to help Troopers do what they do best, protect the State of Maine. When a State Police K9 is ready to retire, it is a difficult decision for both the agency and the handler. Most of the time dogs are retired because of failing health and failing abilities. In almost every case, a K9 is retired to become the family pet of the handler who takes the responsibility to care for and attend to the needs of the dog for the rest of its life.

While we believe that this is a great idea, we also recognize that there is a significant annual fiscal note for funds and so many competing State Police priorities in the Governor's budget.

There are currently 10 retired State Police dogs with their handlers. This bill would cost up to \$5,000 per dog annually for medical bills. This bill would create a financial liability of up to \$50,000 annually for retired K9s when we would have no authority over the decisions made as it relates the dog's continued care.

While we believe that health care for retired State Police K9s are a worthy investment, and the citizens of the State of Maine should be grateful for their service; we also recognize the competing priorities for other State Police assets, equipment and personnel as already identified in the Governor's budget.

Respectfully,

Major Gosselin