

LD2156, " An Act to Authorize the Provision of Emergency Medical Treatment for Certain Dogs "  
Testimony of Michelle Cole, Casco, ME, Falmouth Police Department

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and Members of the  
Health Care, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee:

I have been a police officer for 27 years. I recently retired from the City of Portland, and in that time, had the privilege of training and partnering with four amazing working dogs over the span of 22 years in the department's canine unit. My partners included those trained in Explosives Detection, and Dual-Purpose Patrol/Narcotics Detection which included apprehension, tracking, evidence recovery, and narcotics detection. I have held certifications through United States Police Canine Association, Maine Criminal Justice Academy, and Department of Homeland Security. I have also held certification as an assistant trainer through the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and was most recently the unit trainer prior to retiring. I am a US Army veteran as well as a licensed Basic Emergency Medical Technician. I obtained an associate degree as a Veterinary Technician and am currently employed per diem at a local veterinary hospital. My current full-time job is a Police Officer in the Town of Falmouth.

Working dogs are sometimes miles and hours away from veterinary care or treatment if in remote deployments. These working dogs are not only our partners, but essential tools in saving lives and solving crimes. They and their handlers are placed in inherently dangerous conditions that most could not imagine. These dogs are highly trained and not easily replaced and deserve a fighting chance at surviving injuries sustained in these environments.

Since 2016, a very passionate group of professionals have been working to progress canine care for working dogs if injured in the field. We have a group of doctors, both veterinary and human, emergency medical personnel as well as tactical medics, canine handlers, and licensed veterinary technicians. We have trained hundreds of handlers and medics to provide life-saving pre-hospital care to injured canines in the field, with the hope of being able to stabilize them for transport to a treating veterinary facility.

In 2018, MRS Title 14, §164-B. IMMUNITY FROM CIVIL LIABILITY FOR ASSISTANCE GIVEN TO LAW ENFORCEMENT DOGS, SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS AND SERVICE DOGS was enacted. In 2021, another equally passionate member of our group authored the Operational K9 Annex protocols for Maine Emergency Medical Services in conjunction with subject matter experts and one of, if not THE, leading Veterinarian in the nation, Dr. Lee Palmer, offering collaborative advice to ensure that it was carefully and thoughtfully prepared. This is the first set of protocols in this arena in the United States and has been referred to by EMS professionals nationwide as they establish their own protocols for care of Operational K9's in the field. These protocols are in no way intended to replace treatment by a veterinarian but are simply a means to stabilize them until they can receive proper veterinary care.

Subject matter experts within the State recently met to ensure that the amended wording to this proposed bill, LD2156, " An Act to Authorize the Provision of Emergency Medical Treatment for Certain Dogs " was a collaborative and unified effort. Please accept my testimony in **SUPPORT** of LD2156, " An Act to Authorize the Provision of Emergency Medical Treatment for Certain Dogs " as **AMENDED**.

Sincerely,



Michelle L. Cole