

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

DATE: 08 February 2024

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of Preveterinary Care Legislation and Establishment of Statewide Veterinary EMS (VEMS) Care and Transportation protocols for Operational K9s injured in the line of duty.

On behalf of the K9 Tactical Emergency Casualty Care Working Group (K9 TECC) and the National Association of Veterinary EMS (NAVEMS), I am writing in full support of legislation and Veterinary EMS (VEMS) statewide protocols that allow licensed Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers the ability to render prehospital, life-saving medical aid and transport to Operational Working Animals (e.g. Police Dogs) injured while serving in the Line of Duty (LOD).

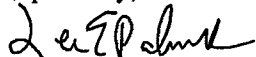
I am a board-certified Emergency and Critical Care Veterinarian and active Certified Tactical Paramedic for the Lee County SWAT team in Auburn, AL. I serve as a US Army Reserve Veterinary Corps Officer; Veterinary Medical Director for NAVEMS; Lead and founder for the K9-Tactical Emergency and Casualty Care (K9 TECC) Working Group; Board of Advisers for the Committee of Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (C-TECC), and Member for the Defense Committee on Trauma, Canine Combat Casualty Care committee. All the committees and working groups for which I serve, have the mission of fostering the awareness, enhancing the quality, and increasing the availability of Veterinary Prehospital Care through advocacy, education, and research. I have had the privilege of working with various States from across the country to help compose and pass legislation like that desired in Maine. To date, over 20 states have already enacted or are in the process of developing preveterinary care legislation granting authority for EMS providers to render emergency care to injured Operational K9s.

Operational K9s (OpK9s) serve Federal, State and Local governmental and non-governmental organizations have continuously proven a force multiplier in the success of many operations. Like their human counterparts, OpK9s remain at a high risk for LOD injuries and death. Despite their invaluable contribution towards safeguarding our society's freedoms, prehospital care for these OpK9s remains grossly lacking. Most OpK9 handlers receive little to no training in basic first responder care for their canine partner. Veterinary-specific EMS services do not exist nor do veterinary personnel typically deploy as part of an OpK9 response element or team. Although human-trained EMS providers have the capability to render life-saving aid to an injured OpK9, the lack of defined legal authority authorizing them to render such care hampers their willingness to do so. Lack of clear legal authority leaves the EMS community open to the potential risk of liability and legal reprisal when, and if, they choose to render out-of-hospital emergency care to OpK9s.

The combined lack of readily available point of injury care and high-risk of traumatic injury provide a recipe for high mortality rates for these invaluable K9s. As a vital member of our team, OpK9s deserve access to timely prehospital care to ensure their continued survival and value to our society. Many of the injuries sustained by these OpK9s in the field are easily mitigated with the application of basic first aid techniques. The same techniques that EMS responders are already trained and certified to perform to save human life. It is imperative that we provide an avenue for EMS responders to render such life-saving care to OpK9s when veterinary personnel are not available. Enactment of Preveterinary Care Legislation is the first, and most important, step for providing this avenue and availability of care.

Operational K9s are our companions, teammates, and defenders; they dedicate their lives to save ours. It is imperative that we afford them the care they deserve when injured in the LOD while protecting us. To eliminate any legalities that may interfere with an injured OpK9 receiving appropriate and timely prehospital care, we strongly urge you to support Maine's Preveterinary Care/VEMS initiative.

Respectfully,



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