



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good afternoon Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfuss, and members of the Criminal Justice Committee.

Maine has partnered with K9s in law enforcement since the late 1970s. These highly trained dogs provide services that human officers simply cannot. K9s can detect hidden dangers, alert officers to specific substances, and provide critical support, especially in Maine's most rural and remote areas.

Law enforcement officers who enroll in K9 programs make a significant personal commitment by bringing a trained police K9 into their homes. These dogs require constant training and must consistently meet rigorous performance standards. Living and working together day in and day out, the handler and K9 develop a deep bond built on trust, loyalty, and shared service throughout their careers.

At the end of a K9's career, it is common for the handler to honor that loyalty by adopting the dog into retirement, assuming full responsibility for its care at their own expense. However, the medical and care costs associated with a retired police K9, often shaped by years of demanding service, can be significant. This bill establishes an accountable, donation-supported fund to help support these valuable K9 partners and the families who care for them, ensuring they receive the respect and care they have earned through years of service to our state.

Thank you.