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Senator, District 33

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

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**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
LD 2156, An Act to Authorize the Provision of Emergency Medical Treatment for Certain Dogs
Thursday, February 8, 2024**

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Matt Harrington, and I am the State Senator from Sanford representing the people of Senate District 33.

I am happy to be a cosponsor of LD 2156, “An Act to Authorize the Provision of Emergency Medical Treatment for Certain Dogs.”

Back in 2018, LD 1716, An Act to Protect Persons Who Provide Assistance to Law Enforcement Dogs, Search and Rescue Dogs and Service Dogs, was enacted and signed into public law. This law, which created civil liability immunity to EMS professionals who provided first aid to working canines who were injured in the line of duty, gained unanimous support in the Judiciary Committee and unanimous support in the House and Senate.

Unfortunately, despite providing practitioners with civil immunity, they were still at risk of legal liability for practicing veterinarian medicine without a license. There is currently no exception in the Maine Veterinary Practices Act for these professionals who help an injured canine. The need to bridge the care gap for canine partners is recognized nationwide. And our EMS clinicians are ready to fill this gap.

I understand that there may be some hesitation at the thought of putting exceptions in the Maine Veterinary Practices Act. However, I want to put those fears at ease. This is a very specific exception. Nobody here is trying to expand the number or types of exemptions and take away the treatment of animals by veterinarians beyond providing these urgent needs to our canine partners.

Canines are full members of the teams on which they serve. If a human emergency responder is injured in the line of duty, he/she would get the most immediate care available. Our canine partners deserve this same treatment. We have people willing and able to help care for them. We must let them do this job so our dogs can do theirs.

I ask for your support of this bill and thank you for your consideration.