

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

No. 888

S.P. 379

In Senate, February 28, 2023

**An Act to Allow Use of Courthouse Facility Dogs by Criminal
Justice Agencies for Criminal Justice Purposes**

Reference to the Committee on Judiciary suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by President JACKSON of Aroostook.
Cosponsored by Representative COLLINGS of Portland, Representative UNDERWOOD of
Presque Isle.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 15 MRSA §458** is enacted to read:

3 **§458. Courthouse facility dogs**

4 **1. Definitions.** As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the
5 following terms have the following meanings.

6 A. "Assistance dog organization" means an organization that is a member of an
7 internationally recognized assistance dog association that has the primary purpose of
8 granting accreditation for assistance dog acquisition, dog training, dog handler training
9 and dog placement.

10 B. "Child advocacy center" has the same meaning as in Title 22, section 4019,
11 subsection 1, paragraph B.

12 C. "Courthouse facility dog" means a dog that meets the requirements of subsection 2
13 and is handled to do specific, skilled tasks to provide support to a vulnerable witness
14 in the physical spaces of a criminal justice agency.

15 D. "Courthouse facility dog handler" means a person who meets the requirements of
16 subsection 3 and who handles a courthouse facility dog to provide a calming influence
17 on a vulnerable witness during the investigation and prosecution of a crime or other
18 legal proceeding and to provide a comforting presence in those situations.

19 E. "Courthouse facility dog team" means a paired courthouse facility dog and
20 courthouse facility dog handler that meets the requirements of subsection 4.

21 F. "Criminal justice agency" means a state or local agency that performs the
22 administration of criminal justice, including a court, a law enforcement agency, the
23 Department of the Attorney General, a district attorney's office and a child advocacy
24 center.

25 G. "Independent professional dog trainer" means a private dog trainer who provides
26 dog training and dog handler training and who has been approved to be an evaluator of
27 a nationally recognized dog obedience program, which may include the American
28 Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen, Community Canine and Urban Canine Good
29 Citizen programs.

30 **2. Requirements for courthouse facility dog.** In order to be a courthouse facility
31 dog, a dog must be at least 2 years of age and:

32 A. Have graduated from an assistance dog organization training program; or

33 B. Be certified by an independent professional dog trainer as:

34 (1) Having completed at least 100 hours of individualized training focused on
35 obedience and the skills needed for providing quiet companionship to a vulnerable
36 witness in a legal setting without causing a disruption in a legal proceeding and
37 demonstrating competence in those skills, including having a calm demeanor,
38 being able to work in a high-stress environment and being able to sit or lie down
39 beside a witness for a minimum of 90 minutes; and

