

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2026

Legislative Document

No. 2081

H.P. 1396

House of Representatives, January 7, 2026

An Act to Provide Health Care Cost Reimbursement for Retired Law Enforcement Canines

Submitted by the Department of Public Safety pursuant to Joint Rule 203.
Reference to the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety suggested and ordered
printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative BISHOP of Bucksport.

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

2 Sec. 1. 25 MRSA c. 203 is enacted to read:

3 **CHAPTER 203**

4 **RETIRED LAW ENFORCEMENT CANINE HEALTH CARE**

5 **§1821. Health care cost reimbursement for retired law enforcement canines**

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

8 A. "Agency head" means the chief official of a state law enforcement agency,
9 including, but not limited to, the Chief of the State Police, the State Fire Marshal, the
10 Game Warden Colonel or the Commissioner of Public Safety.

11 B. "Applicant" means a handler of a retired law enforcement canine or an individual
12 who adopts a retired law enforcement canine.

13 C. "Law enforcement canine" means a canine that has been:

14 (1) Certified by a nationally recognized or state-recognized law enforcement
15 canine certification organization; and

16 (2) Trained and actively deployed in a law enforcement capacity by a state law
17 enforcement agency.

18 D. "Retired law enforcement canine" means a law enforcement canine that no longer
19 serves in active law enforcement duty and:

20 (1) Served a minimum of 5 years in active law enforcement duty; or

21 (2) Served less than 5 years in active law enforcement duty and was retired from
22 service due to a medical condition diagnosed by a veterinarian licensed in
23 accordance with Title 32, section 4860 and approved by the employing agency
24 head.

25 **2. Retired Law Enforcement K-9 Health Care Fund.** The Retired Law Enforcement
26 K-9 Health Care Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," is established in and
27 administered by the Department of Public Safety. The fund must be held separate and apart
28 from all other money, funds and accounts. Interest earned by the fund must be credited to
29 the fund. Any unexpended balances remaining in the fund at the end of any fiscal year do
30 not lapse and must be carried forward to the next fiscal year.

31 A. The fund must be used to reimburse applicants for veterinary health care costs for
32 eligible retired law enforcement canines. Reimbursable services include:

33 (1) Routine preventive care;

34 (2) Treatment of illness or injury; and

35 (3) Medications and surgical procedures necessary to maintain the retired law
36 enforcement canine's quality of life.

B. Reimbursement is limited to \$5,000 per eligible law enforcement canine for the life of the canine, subject to available appropriations and submittal of documentation required under subsections 3 and 4. An agency head may, at the agency head's sole discretion, provide additional reimbursement from the agency's appropriated budget, including, but not limited to, a designated subfund or line-item allocation. There is no limit on the amount a law enforcement agency may reimburse from its own funds.

3. Eligibility. To qualify for reimbursement under this section:

A. A canine must be a retired law enforcement canine;

B. The applicant must reside in the State;

C. The canine may not be in active service with any state or local law enforcement agency; and

D. A completed application must be submitted to the Department of Public Safety that includes:

(1) A diagnosis by a veterinarian licensed in accordance with Title 32, section 4860; and

(2) Proof of veterinary expenses incurred.

4. Funding sources. The fund consists of:

A. Appropriations and allocations from the Legislature:

B. Contributions from private sources, including donations, grants and endowments;
and

C. Fines or fees collected and allocated by the Legislature.

If appropriations and allocations from the Legislature are insufficient, a law enforcement agency may use funds from its appropriated budget, including agency-specific subfunds or designated line-item allocations, to reimburse veterinary expenses for a retired law enforcement canine that served in that agency. Such a reimbursement is at the sole discretion of the agency head.

5. Rulemaking. The Commissioner of Public Safety shall adopt rules to implement this section. The rules must:

A. Establish reimbursement guidelines;

B. Establish application procedures;

C. Ensure equitable distribution of funds; and

D. Identify procedures for maintaining records of disbursements.

Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Retired Law Enforcement K-9 Health Care Fund, administered by the Department of Public Safety, to reimburse up to \$5,000 for veterinary expenses for eligible retired law enforcement canines who served on a state law enforcement agency. To be eligible, canines must have served a minimum of 5 years in active law enforcement

1 duty or been retired prior to serving 5 years in active law enforcement duty due to medical
2 necessity. A law enforcement agency head may, at the agency head's sole discretion,
3 provide additional reimbursement from the budget of that agency without limit. The fund
4 may also receive private donations, grants and other sources of funding.