

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.

R. B. Hunt
ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative BISHOP of Bucksport.

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

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

CHAPTER 203

RETIRED LAW ENFORCEMENT CANINE HEALTH CARE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) Routine preventive care;

(2) Treatment of illness or injury; and

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

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

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

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

9 B. The applicant must reside in the State;

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

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

14 (1) A diagnosis by a veterinarian licensed in accordance with Title 32, section
15 4860; and

16 (2) Proof of veterinary expenses incurred.

17 **4. Funding sources.** The fund consists of:

18 A. Appropriations and allocations from the Legislature;

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

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

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

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

29 A. Establish reimbursement guidelines;

30 B. Establish application procedures;

31 C. Ensure equitable distribution of funds; and

32 D. Identify procedures for maintaining records of disbursements.

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

35 SUMMARY

36 This bill establishes the Retired Law Enforcement K-9 Health Care Fund, administered
37 by the Department of Public Safety, to reimburse up to \$5,000 for veterinary expenses for
38 eligible retired law enforcement canines who served on a state law enforcement agency.
39 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.