

## Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-932

AN ACT CONCERNING POLICE ANIMALS AND DOGS IN VOLUNTEER

**Title:** CANINE SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAMS.

**Vote Date:** 3/16/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/14/2023

**File No.:** 375

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

### Co-Sponsors

[Rep. Tammy Nuccio, 53rd Dist.](#)

[Sen. Paul Cicarella, 34th Dist.](#)

[Rep. Nicole Klarides-Ditria, 105th Dist.](#)

[Rep. Ben McGorty, 122nd Dist.](#)

[Rep. Jill Barry, 31st Dist.](#)

[Rep. Michael D Quinn, 82nd Dist.](#)

[Sen. Eric C. Berthel, 32nd Dist.](#)

[Rep. Tony J Scott, 112th Dist.](#)

### REASONS FOR BILL:

Police animals are an important part of law enforcement and search and rescue teams in our state, they assist in protecting the communities they serve. These animals deserve to have safety protections. This bill increases the penalty for intentionally injuring a police animal or a dog in a volunteer search and rescue team. It also includes a penalty for annoying, teasing or tormenting a police animal that is in a motor vehicle. When a police animal is injured, this bill would allow emergency medical services to provide necessary emergency treatment and transportation if the animal is injured in the line of duty. Police canine are also subject to injury and a grant program would be established to provide canine officers with body armor

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Manisha Juthani, MD, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Public Health**

Commissioner Juthani has concerns regarding the section of the bill that would allow Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to render medical care to an injured police dog. This presents significant risk to EMS providers, as an injured dog could bite an unknown provider. Ambulances are not equipped with appropriate devices to properly restrain a police dog. The cost to appropriately train EMS workers to care for an injured animal will be expensive and complex. Dr. Juthani is open to having more conversations regarding this proposal and encourages the members of committee to reach out with any questions.

**Julianna McVeigh, Master's Student at the Yale School of Public Health, Certified Health Specialist, and Fellow for The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors Equity and Opportunity, Connecticut General Assembly**

Ms. McVeigh writes in support of this bill, specifically sections 2 & 3. Police dogs in Connecticut have a history of protecting their communities and can be trained in specialties such as body recovery, arson situations and drug detection. Police dogs deserve emergency intervention if injured in the line of duty. The CWCSEO supports this bill and ask that it be extended to include assisted living and service dogs for the elderly and disabled adults. Service dogs are specially trained and also need to have the same protections.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Senator Paul Cicarella, Deputy Republican Leader, State of Connecticut**

Sen. Cicarella is in support of this bill and is a co-sponsor. Police dogs continue to be excellent partners serving our communities and they serve many roles. The roles are locating missing persons, detecting drugs, firearms, explosives and apprehending suspects. These animals continue to show that they are an asset to our local and state police. The training for these specialized, highly trained animals is expensive. On average the cost is between \$12,000 and \$20,000. This is a bipartisan bill, and this measure cleared the senate in 2021 unanimously. There must be zero tolerance when it comes to bad actors seeking to harm these animals.

**Representative Tony Scott, House of Representatives, State of Connecticut**

Rep. Scott is in support of this bill, especially Section 2, 3 and 4. This portion of the bill came to Rep. Scott from Rep. Steven Xiarhos who passed the bipartisan bill in Massachusetts in 2022. These dogs are not just animals, they are serving the community with their partners in uniform everyday to serve and protect us.

**Jeffrey Atwood**

Mr. Atwood writes in support of this bill. Mr. Atwood supports all the benefits in this bill to protect police animals and dogs who protect their fellow officers and the public. Mr. Atwood feels so strongly regarding the safety of these animals, he donated a bullet proof/stab proof vest to K9 Zeke in Bloomfield.

**Connecticut Police Chiefs' Association, CPCA**

CPCA is in support of this bill. Throughout our state most law enforcement agencies use police dogs. The use of these dogs is an asset. There are many reasons that a police dog can be injured in the line of duty, this bill will allow for EMS to treat and transport them.

**Evan Kelly**

Police working dogs and other search and rescue K9 in the state serve selflessly and nobly. There is no question that K9's should be protected by laws of serious consequence for intentionally or reckless causing harm to a K9. These dogs should be given EMS services and protected with body armor, safety harnesses and cut resistant footwear.

**Michael Maliszewski**

Mr. Maliszewski supports this bill. Mr. Maliszewski was directly involved when a close friend of his in Massachusetts lost his friend and severely injured the police dog, Nero who was serving with him in the line of duty. This event has had an impact on Mr. Maliszewski, and he has promised his new friend Rep. Steve Xiarhos that he would do whatever he could to pass what he called Nero's law. It is important that police dogs be afforded the necessary care when injured in the line of duty.

**Stacey Ober, J.D., Government Relations, Regional Manager, American Kennel Club**

Ms. Ober writes in support of this bill on behalf of the AKC. AKC values these animals and the contribution and role they play in protecting those in our community. Last year both Rhode Island and Massachusetts enacted bills to have EMS personnel have the skills and training to maintain airway, pack a wound and reduce excessive bleeding that may lead to shock and death of a police animal that is injured in the line of duty. EMS being authorized to provide life saving measures is an important measure.

**The following two people also wrote in support of this bill as they feel police animals deserve to be protected. These animals are an important part of law enforcement and search and rescue teams.**

**Deborah Orosz**

**Lori Riley**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT)**

Ms. Zaccagnino for the ACLU-CT writes in opposition to the bill. Increasing the penalty for injuring a police animal is not the answer to this offense. Longer sentences are not a deterrent. There is lack of evidentiary support and the fact that injuries to police dogs occur extremely rarely in Connecticut demonstrate that this proposed change is not necessary. The ACLU-CT is dedicated to end mass incarceration and is hopeful that the General Assembly continue to progress towards this goal and reducing the number of people who enter the legal system. Increasing penalties will not progress towards this goal, especially for crimes that have not real justification to do so.

**Reported by: Bonnie Gray, Assistant Clerk**

**Date: 3/22/2023**