



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 26, 2022

The Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senate Bill 70 Emergency Medical System Plan – Guidelines for Emergency Medical Services –
Law Enforcement Canines
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you, Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for allowing me to present and ask for your support for Senate Bill 70 – which would allow for law enforcement canines injured in the line of duty to receive emergency medical services by authorized emergency medical services personnel as part of the State’s Emergency Medical System plan and guidelines.

I have always believed that the best ideas for legislation come from the front lines, especially when it comes to public safety. With SB 70, Worcester County Deputy Sheriff, Lt. Bethany Ramey who serves as the canine coordinator for the Worcester County Sheriff’s office made me aware of the unique role and the dangers that police canines face on a daily basis.

Seeing these dogs in action and hearing their on-the-job stories from their handlers highlighted for me the various roles of canine law enforcement ranging from sniffing out and tracking fentanyl and other lethal, illegal drugs; to pursuing violent criminals in dangerous neighborhoods, and to even taking a bullet that was meant for the officer.

The training, investment, and time invested in Maryland’s police canines is significant, and they are doing their part to keep Maryland and our law enforcement safe. But when a police canine is placed in a life-threatening situation and is injured in the line of duty, there is no clear recourse for emergency medical services to be provided to these hero dogs.

As you will hear from Sheriff Mike Lewis of the Wicomico County Sheriff’s office and President of the Maryland Sheriffs and Police Chiefs Association, Worcester County Deputy Sheriff Lt. Ramey, and Ocean City Fire Department Public Information Officer and President of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) in Ocean City Ryan Whittington. There is confusion and no clear authority nor guidelines when it comes to providing emergency medical services to law enforcement canines injured in the line of duty. More and more states are moving forward with legislation to protect their police canines at the State level, and Maryland’s law enforcement canines deserve no less.

SB 70 simply would allow for emergency medical services to be provided to police canines injured in the line of duty as long as no humans concurrently need those emergency medical services, to allow for transport of the police canine to a veterinary facility and would grant legal immunity to those emergency medical services personnel providing these services in good faith.

I also appreciate the willingness and leadership of Ocean City Fire Department’s fire and EMS professionals to work closely with the appropriate State agencies, law enforcement, and canine veterinarians to expedite the guidelines and protocols so we can provide our police canines the support and medical care that they have earned and deserve.

To share a local example of the cooperation between local emergency personnel and veterinarians, Dr. William Watson of Atlantic Veterinary Service shared his strong support of Senate Bill 70 and told me how he has donated canine oxygen masks to the Ocean City Fire Department to care for injured police canines on the emergency scene.

Senate Bill 70 has a strong cross section of support including law enforcement, fire and EMS personnel, veterinarians, and several animal protection groups including the Humane Society, the Animal Welfare Institute, and Maryland Votes for Animals. I respectfully ask my colleagues for a favorable report on SB 70 to support and protect our police canines.

Thank you for your kind consideration.