

January 24, 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 Lt. Bethany Ramey, Worcester County Sheriff's Office

Dear Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Good morning, I am Lt. Bethany Ramey from the Worcester County Sheriff's Office, I have been a canine handler with the sheriff's office for almost fifteen years. I served as the canine supervisor during this time and as the canine coordinator. Throughout my career as a canine handler I worked two dual purpose police canines. Both of these canines served the citizens of Worcester County in various roles to include law enforcement and search and rescue.

Police canines play a vital role in the duties of law enforcement, not so different than that of their human counterparts. They put their lives on the front line just like police officers. Police canines are expected to utilize their unique skill sets to serve the community by looking for missing people, searching for controlled dangers substances, searching for explosives, locating evidence, searching buildings and apprehending violent criminal offenders just to name a few.

Canines utilized by law enforcement agencies, just like police officers are a significant investment of time, training and cost. Additionally, those canines like police officers become ambassadors of their agencies and imbed themselves in their communities. While our canine counterparts have an important public safety role in our local communities, they are at a real disadvantage when it comes to the lack of emergency medical services if they are injured in the line of duty.

Currently, if a canine is placed in a life threatening situation the options to care for the canine is limited by current laws. If a citizen of Maryland is exposed to fentanyl or another dangerous substance EMS can administer life saving measures. If a citizen of Maryland is critically injured and losing blood EMS can administer life saving measures. If it is a law enforcement canine the only options rest with the canine handler who is minimally trained in EMS care and whose efforts will most likely not assist the canine with life saving measures. If emergency medical services can be provided to our military canines, then there's no reason we should not have State protocols for providing emergency medical services to our police canines.

These canine protect our first responders on a daily basis and serve our communities. It's our duty to protect them just as we protect our first responders. I strongly urge you to give Senate Bill 70 a favorable report for the safety of our canines.