

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 910

(Senator Simonaire)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Health and Government Operations

Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program – Definitions – Therapy Horse

This bill alters the definition of “therapy horse” under the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program by removing the requirement that a stable be a *premier accredited* member center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International (PATH, Intl.) to determine if a horse is appropriate for interactions with veterans.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The change is technical in nature and does not directly affect governmental finances.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 416 of 2017 established the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program and Fund. The program is designed to refer eligible veterans to selected nonprofit training organizations to be paired with “service dogs” or “support dogs” and facilitate their training. The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs must select at least one nonprofit training entity that meets specified qualifications to carry out elements of the program.

Chapter 465 of 2019 expanded the program to include nonprofit training entities that use trained therapy horses for interaction with veterans. Under the program, “therapy horse”

includes, among other things, a horse determined appropriate for interactions with veterans by a stable licensed by the State that is a PATH, Intl. premier accredited member center.

Revenue from the fund may be used only to pay a nonprofit training entity and for administrative costs of the program. Expenditures from the fund may be made only in accordance with the State budget. At the close of fiscal 2022, there was \$13,451 in the fund.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Veterans Affairs; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 13, 2023
km/jc Third Reader - March 20, 2023

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