SENATE BILL 182

P1 5lr0788 (PRE–FILED)

By: Senator Simonaire

Requested: September 10, 2024

Introduced and read first time: January 8, 2025

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

A BILL ENTITLED

1	AN ACT concerning					
2 3	Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program – Eligibility – Family Members of Veterans					
4 5 6	Program to include a spouse or dependent of an eligible veteran; and generally					
7 8 9 10 11	BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments, Article – State Government Section 9–957 Annotated Code of Maryland (2021 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)					
12 13	,					
14	Article - State Government					
15	9–957.					
16	(a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.					
17 18	(2) "ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBER" MEANS A SPOUSE OR DEPENDENT OF AN ELIGIBLE VETERAN.					
19	(3) "Eligible veteran" means an individual who:					
20	(i) served on active duty in:					



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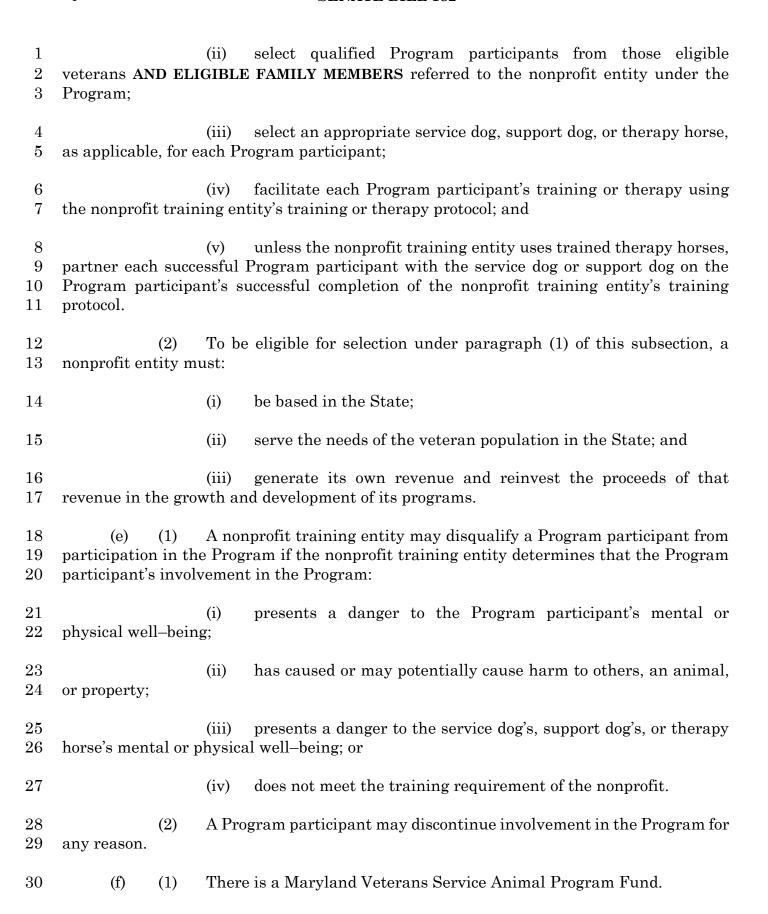
1		1.	the armed forces of the United States;		
2		2.	the National Guard; or		
3 4	States;	3.	a reserve component of the armed forces of the United		
5	(ii)	serv	ed in a capacity other than for training;		
6 7	dishonorable; and	was	discharged or released under conditions other than		
8	(iv)	1.	is a resident of the State; or		
9 10	Veterans Affairs or U.S.	2. Depar	receives treatment or care from a U.S. Department of rtment of Defense medical facility in the State.		
11 12	[(3)] (4) Fund established under	[(3)] (4) "Fund" means the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Programund established under subsection (f) of this section.			
13 14					
15	(i)	is qu	ualified under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;		
16 17	(ii) use by veterans; or	1.	engages in the training of service dogs or support dogs for		
18 19	and	2.	uses trained therapy horses for interaction with veterans;		
20 21	this section. (iii)	has	been selected by the Department to provide services under		
22 23	[(5)] (6) Program established un	"Program" means the Maryland Veterans Service Animal under subsection (b) of this section.			
24 25	[(6)] (7) FAMILY MEMBER who		gram participant" means an eligible veteran OR ELIGIBLE pates in the Program.		
26 27 28	-	ne ben	vice dog" means a dog that is individually trained to do work efit of an individual with a disability, including physical, al, or other mental disability.		

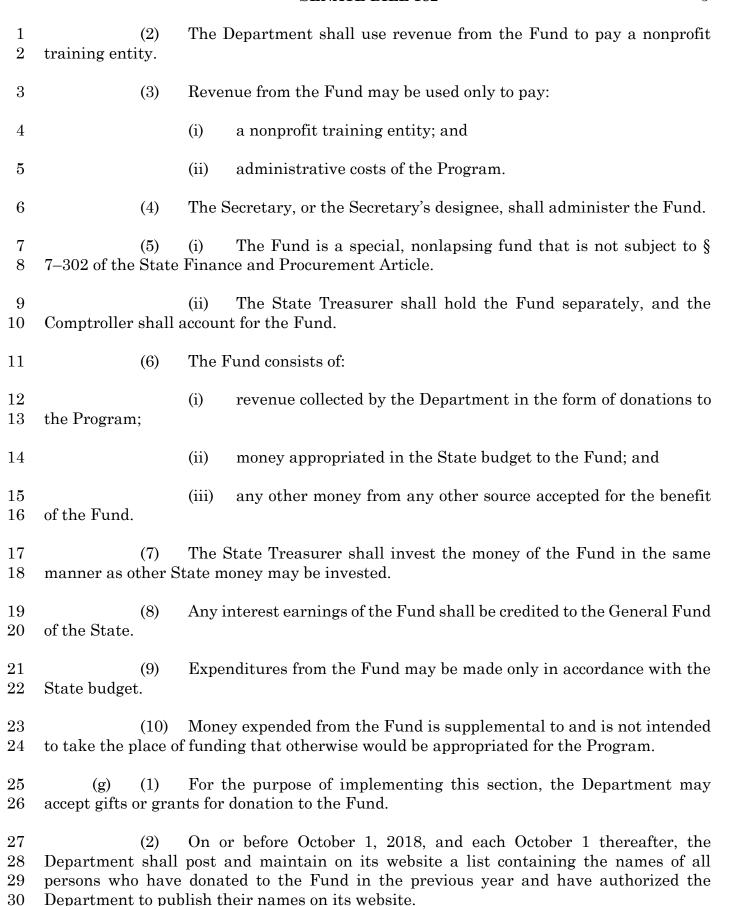
1 2 3	[(8)] (9) "Successful Program participant" means a Program participant who successfully completes the training or therapy protocol specified by a nonprofit training entity.				
4 5 6 7	[(9)] (10) "Support dog" means a dog that is individually trained and that serves as an emotional support or therapy animal that a medical professional, within the medical professional's scope of practice, has determined provides benefit for an individual with a sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.				
8 9	[(10)] (11) "Therapy horse" includes a horse determined appropriate for interactions with veterans by a stable licensed by the State that:				
10 11	(i) is a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International (PATH, Intl.) member center; or				
12 13	(ii) has Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) certified professionals who provide services to veterans.				
14	(b) There is a Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program in the Department.				
15	(c) The purposes of the Program are to:				
16 17	(1) refer eligible veterans AND ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBERS who inquire about participation in the Program to one or more nonprofit training entities;				
18 19	(2) provide additional funding mechanisms to assist veterans AND ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBERS participating in the Program;				
20 21 22	(3) encourage successful Program participants to assist in outreach and referral of other eligible veterans AND ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBERS who could benefit from participation in the Program;				
23	(4) assist in the reduction of the Maryland veteran suicide rate; and				
24 25	(5) identify potential capital projects and services to facilitate more services for veterans AND ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBERS in the State.				
26	(d) (1) The Department shall select at least one nonprofit training entity to:				
27 28 29	(i) implement a training or therapy protocol for the purposes of the Program that will teach each Program participant methodologies, strategies, and techniques for:				
30	1. partnering with service dogs or support dogs; or				

interacting with therapy horses;

2.

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- 1 (h) The Department shall adopt regulations to implement this section, including 2 regulations establishing procedures for the Department to:
- 3 (1) promote the Program to eligible veterans AND ELIGIBLE FAMILY 4 MEMBERS through the Department's outreach methods;
- 5 (2) refer eligible veterans **AND ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBERS** to selected nonprofit entities;
- 7 (3) receive donations for the Fund through a link placed in a prominent 8 location on the Department's website; and
- 9 (4) use revenue from the Fund to pay selected nonprofit entities for services 10 that are provided through the Program.
- SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2025.