



Buckeye Emergency Response Training School, LLC.

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To Whom it may concern:

Dear Sirs,

I would like to pledge my support and encourage you to do the same for H.B. 349 to extend protections to professionally trained, vetted, and maintained Search & Rescue (SAR) K9's and Equine.

Over the last 13 years I have traveled and worked with many SAR professionals and volunteers, training and/or certifying more than 2,000 people from 38 states, all branches of the military, and Canada. As Licensed Social Worker in the public sector, Firefighter and EMT, I know first-hand the limitations of budgets and the reality of need for more resources for First Responders.

With the limitations and constraints placed upon Law Enforcement (LE), Fire, and EMS First Responders for training it is a widely accepted practice to utilize Professionally trained, certified, and vetted volunteer SAR resources in the event of a missing or unaccounted for individual. This is not to suggest in any way that our First Responder communities are not competent. Rather, we have come to recognize the greatest need of a given community, (i.e. gangs, domestic violence, drugs, homicide, arson, etc), is where the local paid First Responder training and resource budget, both fiscal and time, must be spent. All said, this mandates many, many "lesser" identified needs to go untrained year after year. This leave a community at risk when a person goes missing. For example. A community has a K9 Officer. The K9 and Handler may be cross trained in multiple disciplines from narcotics to Explosives detection, security, or one of the 7 SAR disciplines currently recognized. However, the LE team of man and K9 are used, used, and over used. When this happens, training time is reduced for the sake of crime fighting. This is not an excuse or complaint, but a simple reality expressed by one handler after another. It is not exclusive to Ohio, but to communities and states abroad. What does this have to do with the Professionally Trained, certified, and vetted SAR K9 or Equestrian handler? These Professionals are vetted and their certifications often equal and in many cases exceed the training certifications and field time of the local LE K9 teams for a SAR situation. These Professionals spend countless hours, weekly, training and working with their K9 or Equestrian partners to ensure peak readiness at a moment's notice for active deployment. When the limitations of local resources identified above present and paid First Responders are limited in numbers,

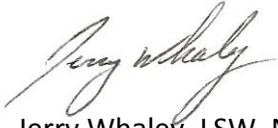
*"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are
pleasing to God" Hebrews 13:16*

Professionally Trained, certified, and vetted volunteer SAR personnel are able to be called upon by the local Agency Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), (i.e. LE, Fire Chief, or EMA Director), to assist under the direction and management of the AHJ. This assistance becomes a professionally trained force multiplier to the AHJ, and generally at no cost; hence why they are called "Volunteers". H.B. 349 is seeking to extend to the 4 legged Professionally trained and certified volunteers with the same or similar protections offered to those of their LE counterparts, with whom they are often integrated and working...and training...side-by-side; "...So that others may live."

For the sake of time, I will simply interject there is a vast and stark difference between Professionally trained, certified, and vetted volunteer handlers over against just anyone who thinks or suggests they or their K9 or Equestrian are 'trained' but who cannot produce training certificates, training logs, or other related materials necessary to validate them as a true or experienced professional. NOTE that non-certified or unvetted personnel pose a tremendous burden of risk upon any AHJ.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important life saving matter.

Respectfully yours and His,



Jerry Whaley, LSW, NREMT, WEMT

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Ongoing Caseworker, Marion County Children Services

Co-Owner/Operator, Buckeye Emergency Response Training School, LLC

EMT, HANCO Ambulance Service – Blanchard Valley Health Systems

Firefighter/EMT, Pleasant Township

Unit 6, Ohio Special Response Team, Inc. (for Search & Rescue)

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