



State Representative Ron Ferguson
State Representative Kevin Miller

House Transportation and Public Safety Committee

Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 392

October 12th, 2021

Representative Ferguson

Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 392.

House Bill 392 authorizes emergency medical personnel to transport a police dog by ambulance if the K-9 is injured in the line of duty. Current Ohio law already permits first responders to provide certain medical services to an injured dog at the scene of an emergency. Our bill would expand emergency medical personnel's ability to act by allowing potentially life-saving transportation of an injured police dog to a veterinarian care center for treatment. It also ensures first responders transporting K-9s are immune from civil damages, criminal prosecution, and professional disciplinary action, as long as they do not act with willful or wanton misconduct.

Similar legislation has already been enacted in the states of Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi, and New York. Additionally, legislation pertaining to this issue is currently under consideration in the states of Arkansas, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

I will now allow my colleague and joint sponsor, Representative Miller, to further explain this legislation.

Representative Miller

Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 392.

As many of you know, I served the citizens of Ohio for over 22 years as a State Trooper prior to my retirement and appointment into the General Assembly. During my career with the Patrol, I held several positions and had the opportunity to work with many amazing individuals including those in the Criminal Patrol Section. The reason I tell you this is because as a commander in the section, the canine program fell under my command. I am certainly not an expert in the subject matter of canine training; however, I am familiar with the program.

The Highway Patrol has over thirty canines and I will tell you that by the time a K-9 is ready to hit the street, it is a very significant investment for the agency. Depending on the cost of the dog and the training involved it could easily be a 15-17 thousand dollar investment. As you can imagine, it is very important to protect that type of an investment. This is where House Bill 392 comes in to play.

Should an on-duty K-9 become injured, it is imperative that it receive immediate medical care. Currently, an injured canine would typically be transported in the kennel area of the handler's vehicle. This is less than ideal because there is typically not enough room in the kennel area for the handler and the canine. In cases of trauma such as a bullet wound or broken leg, it is much better for the canine handler to accompany the dog to restrain and/or tend to the injuries. This is where a squad would be very helpful. The handler could then focus on the dog and have the necessary space to do so while the driver transports them to the veterinary hospital or care center.

Please know that transportation by ambulance under House Bill 392 will only occur if:

1. The dog is injured in the line of duty, and
2. No other human person at the scene requires emergency transport.

As my joint sponsor stated, this is already permitted in several other states. I would also highlight the fact that this language is entirely permissive so any agency, department, or business can choose not to transport canines if they do not wish to do so.

We all know police K-9s play an integral role in our communities as first responders, and we believe that allowing transport by ambulance is an important way of supporting our law enforcement officers. I'm sure that if something were to happen to our very own Canines Brody or Grippen here at the Statehouse, we would all want to see them transported to the OSU Veterinary Hospital while Troopers Addy or Hedges tended to them in the squad if necessary.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 392. We would be happy to answer any questions at this time.