

03/07/2023

HB1388

Testimony by: Steven Mayer

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Steven Mayer, and I am a K9 handler and State Trooper with the ND Highway Patrol. I am accompanied today by Retired K9 Boudreaux. We are here today to show our support for House Bill 1388.

K9 Boudreaux is a 13-year-old Bloodhound. He has served the State of North Dakota in his official capacity as a trailing dog for 10 years retiring last May. During his tenure with the Highway Patrol, K9 Boudreaux was involved in over 200 case trails and located approximately 20 missing individuals.

Our agency retires our K9s at the peak of their performance allowing them to live a good retirement life after their service to the citizens of ND. A large majority of our handlers take ownership of the dogs after they retire and keep them as their own. I have often joked that I have spent more time with my K9 working and at home than I do with my own wife. So, you can see the attachment that we have with our partners.

Once our K9 is retired, the sole responsibility is transferred to the handler. This includes any medical bills, food, kennel costs, etc. This can often become large amounts of money as veterinarian expenses add up, especially with an older dog. In their prime when the dogs are in use, medical expenses can be minimal as they are a top performing athlete so to speak. Just like humans, as we age our medical needs go up as well. So do the K9s. This is the time when the dog is the most expensive and agency's no longer having to bear the burden of the expense that comes with an aging dog.

Just some examples of expenses that we have with K9 Boudreaux. Dog food \$90.00 a month. Joint supplements \$70.00 a month, Apoquel during summer months \$70.00. Annual physical, shots as well as heartworm and flea and tick preventative. This all adds up. The burden at this time is on the handler and not the state or agency involved no longer.

HB1388 will help offset some of the expenses that the officer now must occur due to taking ownership of the animal. Granted one can say that they do not have to take the animal and could turn it back over to the agency, but would you want to give up an "adopted" member of your family after having them for 10 years? The \$1000 limit that this bill has will help the handler take care of his dog. And I think that this bill goes a long way to show the support for these animals who have selflessly devoted themselves to the people of their municipalities, counties and state.

Thank you.