Bill No.: HB-6364
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION FOR STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT K9S.
Vote Date: 3/29/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 2/25/2019

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
This legislation enables law enforcement K9s to be transported to a veterinarian hospital for treatment of an injury experienced while in the field. In addition, it provides immunity to ambulance services that provide such transportation. This bill was proposed to place focus on the care and treatment of K9s since they play a key role in law enforcement matters including the current fight against opioids.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Commissioner Raul Pino, Department of Public Health (DPH): DPH is opposed to this legislation. The Department appreciates the intent of this legislation, however notes that an animal needs the specialized care of a veterinarian. Furthermore, certain veterinarians are Emergency and Critical Care Specialists, which means that they are trained to handle life-threatening injuries and conditions. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers are not trained to care for animals. Of the four EMS providers, only advanced EMTs and paramedics are able to order intravenous medications; however, neither are trained in administering IVs to animals. By passing this legislation, EMS providers would be operating outside of their scope of practice.

Representative Brenda Kupchick, 132 Assembly District, Connecticut General Assembly: Rep. Kupchick supports this bill because it will bring attention to the care and treatment of law enforcement canines. K9 units play a large role in fighting the opioid crisis, as dogs have the ability to detect drugs more effectively than humans. However, when a dog is injured or suffering from a drug overdose, they do not receive the care they deserve.
Currently, dogs are not allowed transport in an ambulance and cannot receive care from EMTs. Therefore, they must be transported in a regular vehicle to the veterinarian, which prevents the handler from properly caring for the dog in route to the facility. In a number of cases, the dogs may suffer an overdose (if they are trained to bite objects of interest) or experience a severe loss of blood. In five states, K9s can be transported via ambulance and in two states, K9s can receive treatment from EMTs. There currently are no states whose laws provide both aspects of treatment. Under this bill, K9s will be able to receive treatment from EMTs in the form of intravenous opioid antagonists and first aid. Officers will also be equipped with an opioid antagonist nasal spray. The final component will allow K9s to be transported in an ambulance. These initiatives will benefit both the dogs and humans involved.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Laurie Maulucci and Mabel Diamond, President and Legislative Liaison, Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs and Responsible Dog Owners, Inc. (CFDRDO): The CFDRDO represents fifty-two dog clubs in the state and seeks to “promote responsible dog ownership to include the general welfare of dogs and their owners.” CFDRDO supports this legislation, which focuses on scent detection K9s who are exposed to opioids in the field. In 2016 and 2017, the Drug Enforcement Administration reported the concerns associated with fentanyl and police dogs. Also in 2017, the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine issued a video displaying how veterinarians can administer naloxone (Narcon) to scent detection K9s, as well as how to monitor dogs on the way to the veterinarian. In central Illinois, police and ambulance personnel are being trained on administering Narcon to dogs. CFDRDO respectfully requests that language be added to the bill stating that EMS providers and law enforcement officers be trained to administer opioid antagonists, as well as have an understanding of canine anatomy in order to ensure proper use of injectable medications.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Gregory Allard, VP, American Ambulance Service Inc. et al.: Mr. Allard recognizes the work that law enforcement K9s do; however, he does not support the treatment and transport of dogs in an ambulance. EMS providers do not have the training to work with animals, which presents a danger to the canine and the provider. Furthermore, receiving such training would be expensive and unfunded. However, if training becomes available regarding administering opioid antagonists to K9s, Mr. Allard suggests that individual agencies with K9 officers take advantage of it. Officers already have a greater understanding of K9s, notably their own, and these courses would allow prompt treatment for dogs if required.

Reported by: Meagan Schantz Date: 4/5/19