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1 A bill to be entitled 2 An act relating to appointment of courtroom animal 3 advocates; creating s. 828.035, F.S.; authorizing a 4 court to order that a separate advocate be appointed 5 in the interests of justice for certain criminal 6 proceedings regarding a cat or dog's welfare or 7 custody; providing that a judge's decision denying an 8 appointment of such an advocate is not subject to 9 appeal; authorizing an appointed advocate to take certain actions involving the proceedings; providing 10 11 requirements for an individual to serve as an advocate; providing applicability; providing an 12 effective date. 13 14 15 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida: 16 Section 828.035, Florida Statutes, is created 17 Section 1. 18 to read: 19 828.035 Courtroom animal advocates.-20 (1) In any prosecution or other court proceeding under s. 21 413.081, s. 843.19, or this chapter or in any criminal 22 proceeding regarding the welfare or custody of a cat or dog, the 23 court may order, upon its own initiative or upon the request of

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a party or counsel for a party, that a separate advocate be

appointed to represent the interests of justice. If a court

CODING: Words stricken are deletions; words underlined are additions.

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orders that an advocate be appointed to represent the interests of justice, the court must appoint an advocate who meets the requirements of subsection (3). A decision by the court denying a request to appoint a separate advocate to represent the interests of justice is not subject to appeal.

- (2) An advocate appointed by the court pursuant to subsection (1) may do all of the following:
 - (a) Monitor the case.

- (b) Consult any individual who has information that could aid the judge or the finder of fact and review records relating to the condition of the cat or dog and the defendant's actions, including, but not limited to, records from animal control officers, veterinarians, and police officers.
 - (c) Attend hearings.
- (d) Present information or recommendations to the court pertinent to determinations that relate to the interests of justice, provided that such information and recommendations are based solely upon the duties authorized pursuant to this subsection.
- (3) To serve, on a voluntary basis, as an advocate under this section, an individual must be an attorney or a certified emeritus lawyer under rules of The Florida Bar who has knowledge of animal issues and the legal system or must be a law school student who has an interest in animal issues and the legal system and who is certified by the Florida Supreme Court as a

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certified legal intern in this state. Advocates are required to
be trained to understand their roles and responsibilities under
subsection (2). A list of qualified advocates shall be
maintained by the Animal Law Section of The Florida Bar.
(4) This section does not apply to an entity that is
accredited through a nationally or internationally recognized
zoo or aquarium accreditation organization.

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Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.