

House Bill 770

By: Representatives Scott of the 76<sup>th</sup>, Williams of the 168<sup>th</sup>, Beasley-Teague of the 65<sup>th</sup>, Glanton of the 75<sup>th</sup>, Hutchinson of the 107<sup>th</sup>, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 1 of Chapter 4 of Title 38 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,  
2 relating to the Department of Veterans Service, so as to provide for a competitive grant  
3 program to provide assistance for the cost of service dogs for veterans with post-traumatic  
4 stress disorder; to provide for procedures; to provide for the certification of veteran service  
5 dog providers; to provide for rules and regulations; to provide for related matters; to repeal  
6 conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 Article 1 of Chapter 4 of Title 38 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the  
10 Department of Veterans Service, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as  
11 follows:

12 "38-4-15.

13 (a) The Department of Veterans Service shall, upon appropriation by the General  
14 Assembly, establish a competitive grant program to provide assistance for the cost of  
15 service dogs for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, irrespective of the veteran's  
16 medical treatment provider.

17 (b) Competitive grants shall be awarded to veteran service dog providers that are certified  
18 in accordance with subsection (c) of this Code section to provide the following services to  
19 meet the specific needs of veterans:

20 (1) Purchase of the service dog, including the cost of vaccinations, spaying or neutering,  
21 and microchipping;

22 (2) Service dog training;

23 (3) Equipment, including, but not limited to, a harness, service dog vest, leash, collar,  
24 and crate for the service dog; and

25 (4) Veterinarian services for the service dog.

26 (c)(1) On and after January 1, 2022, the Department of Veterans Service shall accept and  
27 either approve or reject applications to certify veteran service dog providers.

28 (2) To become certified, a veteran service dog provider shall meet all of the following  
29 requirements:

30 (A) The provider shall have an established history of all of the following:

31 (i) The humane treatment of animals, including service animals;

32 (ii) Being directly responsible for the operational training and matching of service  
33 dogs; and

34 (iii) Assuring the long-term support of clients and dogs, including veterans and  
35 service dogs;

36 (B) The provider is willing and able to provide veteran service dogs and services in  
37 accordance with subsection (b) of this Code section;

38 (C) The provider demonstrates, through the submission of appropriate supporting data,  
39 the knowledge, experience, and cultural competency to provide veteran service dog  
40 services;

41 (D) The provider demonstrates, through audits and employment history, the fiscal and  
42 management capacity to capably provide veteran service dogs;

43 (E) The provider is a nonprofit organization that is exempt from federal income  
44 taxation as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) of the federal  
45 Internal Revenue Code;

46 (F) The provider demonstrates, through the submission of appropriate supporting data,  
47 that it has effectively served the needs of veterans and service dogs; and

48 (G) The provider demonstrates that it possesses all required current licenses for its  
49 operations.

50 (3) A veteran service dog provider shall provide to the Department of Veterans Service  
51 current copies of all of the following documents with its application for certification and  
52 at any time during the certification process on request and reasonable notice by such  
53 department:

54 (A) Articles of incorporation and all amendments thereto;

55 (B) A letter of determination from the Internal Revenue Service regarding its status  
56 under Section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) of the federal Internal Revenue Code;

57 (C) Independent audit reports for the previous three years; and

58 (D) A federal and state taxpayer identification number.

59 (4) Applications for certification shall be made on forms prescribed by the Department  
60 of Veterans Service and in the manner prescribed by such department.

61 (5) The Department of Veterans Service shall maintain a list of certified veteran service  
62 dog providers on its website, including the type of services provided by each provider.

63 (6) For the purpose of certification, the Department of Veterans Service may accept  
64 current certifications and licenses from any other state entity, agency, or department as  
65 supporting evidence of the applicant's qualifications.

66 (7) A certification approved by the Department of Veterans Service shall be valid for  
67 three years after the date that such department accepts credentials for certification unless  
68 such department decertifies the veteran service dog provider. The Department of  
69 Veterans Service may decertify a veteran service dog provider if the department  
70 determines that the provider no longer meets the requirements for certification.

71 (d) The Department of Veterans Service shall publicize the services provided to veterans  
72 by the recipients of the grants awarded under this Code section. This shall include, but not  
73 be limited to, efforts on such department's website and through outreach to appropriate  
74 nonprofit entities.

75 (e) The Department of Veterans Service shall, not later than January 1, 2022, develop rules  
76 and regulations for the implementation of this Code section. Such rules and regulations  
77 shall include, but not be limited to, the application criteria, application process, data  
78 collection, and accountability for program expenditures and metrics for evaluation of the  
79 assistance provided."

80 **SECTION 2.**

81 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.