

# Nero's Law Delay Knocked As "Not Acceptable"

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A law enshrining protections for police dogs, named after Yarmouth K9 Nero who was injured on the job in 2018, won't be fully implemented until next year, a delay that is "not acceptable and will jeopardize the health and safety of our K9 officers without justification," according to Sen. Mark Montigny.

Former Gov. Charlie Baker signed Nero's Law in February 2022 to allow medical personnel to transport and provide emergency treatment to police dogs.

The measure was named for German Shepherd police dog Nero of the Yarmouth Police Department, who was injured in the same 2018 incident in which his partner, Sgt. Sean Gannon, was killed. Several ambulances were on the scene, but none were allowed to assist Nero, who had to be transported to a veterinary clinic in a cruiser.

The bill was filed by Montigny and Rep. Steven Xiarhos, who was a Yarmouth deputy police chief in 2018.

When Baker signed the bill, state Public Safety Secretary Terrence Reidy saluted the function that police dogs play, adding, "When an officer's K9 partner is injured in the line of duty, they deserve the immediate access to life-saving treatment and transport that this law makes possible."

Reidy remains in that post under Gov. Maura Healey, whose administration also oversees the state department whose approach to the law's implementation is being called into question.

According to an administration requirement manual that Department of Public Health Commissioner Margaret Cooke sent out on Feb. 2, EMTs won't be required to complete a minimum three-hour training course to treat police dogs until Feb. 10, 2024.

"This is not an extraordinary requirement, and many providers and municipalities have been able to ensure its personnel are trained," Montigny wrote in a letter to Cooke. "In fact, Gillette Stadium recently hosted over 400 EMS personnel for training with the late Sergeant Gannon's mother Denis in attendance. A request by some ambulance services to delay implementation of these basic training requirements is not enough to justify a delay."

Though EMTs won't be required to do the training until 2024, delaying the full implementation of the law, personnel who have been trained in accordance with the protocols the department approved in August can treat and transport police dogs.

Police dog care courses were approved by the department after Aug. 10, 2022, and Montigny said the original deadline for EMT training was February 2023. In his letter, he said some ambulance services had requested a delay in training requirements, which he called "not acceptable."

"Permitting a last-minute delay is also unfair to the many providers and localities who have worked diligently to train their personnel prior to the original February 2023 deadline," he wrote.

Montigny is asking the department to reconsider postponing the deadline and require that the training be implemented within 90 days.

"Too often, K9 officers are in harm's way as they serve and protect our communities," Montigny's letter says. "They deserve nothing less than the very best care should a medical

emergency arise.”