

Massachusetts Senate approves “Nero’s Law”

Legislation creates new protections for law enforcement K9 officers.

Today, the Massachusetts State Senate approved legislation filed by Senator Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford) to create new protections for K9 law enforcement officers. Montigny first filed the bill in response to the tragic event on April 12, 2018, that took the life of New Bedford-native Sergeant Sean Gannon. His fearless K9 partner Nero was also severely injured, requiring significant medical attention. Today’s vote in the Senate was unanimous 38-0.

Despite the multiple empty ambulances on site, Nero had to be rushed to the animal hospital in the back of a police cruiser. Fortunately, Nero was able to survive his injuries, but the inability to transport him shows callousness in our laws towards working dogs who risk their lives every day to serve our commonwealth.

An Act allowing humane transportation of K9 partners aka Nero’s law, authorizes emergency medical service personnel to provide emergency treatment and transport K9 officers. This includes basic first aid, CPR, and administering life-saving interventions such as naloxone. Earlier this summer, Montigny appealed to the Joint Committee on Public Safety to report the bill favorably, and last month the committee obliged his request. The Senate Committee on Ways and Means then quickly reported the bill.

“K9 officers protect the men and women in law enforcement as well as the community at-large. These animals endure extreme danger from gun violence, narcotics, and even explosive materials. Allowing our emergency personnel to provide basic

treatment and transport is a commonsense measure that honors their contributions across the Commonwealth. Sergeant Gannon was a native son of New Bedford and therefore his K9 partner Nero is part of our community's extended family. Words cannot describe the gratitude we have for the Gannon family for their tenacious and compassionate advocacy to get this bill done. I must also thank my colleagues Senators Walter Timilty and Mike Rodrigues for expediting this bill through the committee process," said Senator Montigny (D-New Bedford).

Nero's Law will now advance to the House of Representatives. First-term Representative Steven Xiarhos also filed Montigny's language this session in the House.