

## COURTROOM SUPPORT DOGS

Phone: (517) 373-8080  
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**Senate Bill 248 (proposed substitute H-1)**

**Sponsor: Sen. Dan Lauwers**

**House Committee: Judiciary**

**Senate Committee: Civil Rights, Judiciary, and Public Safety**

**Complete to 10-10-23**

Analysis available at  
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

### SUMMARY:

Senate Bill 248 would amend the Revised Judicature Act to change the age (from under 16 to under 18) of child witnesses who are allowed to be accompanied by a courtroom support dog when testifying. The bill also would allow a dog trained and certified as a therapy dog by a therapy dog organization in Michigan that is recognized by the American Kennel Club to serve as a courtroom support dog.

Section 2163a of the Revised Judicature Act authorizes special arrangements for witnesses in certain situations. Among other considerations, children who are 15 or younger and individuals of any age with developmental disabilities can have a support dog sit with them, or nearby, when testifying as a victim-witness in cases involving child abuse and neglect or physical or sexual assault. The bill would change the age for this provision to 17 or younger.

In addition, the act currently defines *courtroom support dog* as a dog that meets either of the following:

- It has been trained and evaluated as a support dog under Assistance Dogs International standards for guide or service work and is repurposed and appropriate for providing emotional support to children and adults in the court or legal system.
- It performed the duties of a courtroom support dog before September 27, 2018 (the effective date of the public act that expressly authorized the use of the dogs<sup>1</sup>).

The bill would add that a dog that is trained and certified as a therapy dog by a therapy dog organization in Michigan that is recognized by the American Kennel Club can be a *courtroom support dog* under section 2163a.

The bill would take effect 90 days after it is enacted.

MCL 600.2163a

### FISCAL IMPACT:

Senate Bill 248 would have no fiscal impact on the state or on local units of government.

Legislative Analyst: Rick Yuille  
Fiscal Analyst: Robin Risko

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2017-2018/billanalysis/House/pdf/2017-HLA-5645-CFEC3FBF.pdf>