

HB 442 -- PROFESSIONAL THERAPY DOGS

SPONSOR: Hoskins

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass by Consent" by the Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 15 to 0.

This bill adds professional therapy dog to the definition of "service dog" as it relates to crimes against these animals or crimes of impersonating a disabled person. A "professional therapy dog" is defined as a dog that is selected, trained, and tested to provide specific physical therapeutic functions under the direction and control of a qualified handler who works with the dog as a team as a part of the handler's occupation or profession but does not include dogs used by volunteers in visitation therapy.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill will provide professional therapy dogs with the same protections that other service dogs have. Professional therapy dogs are crucial in environments like schools and aid children with behavior and integration into the community.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Hoskins; and National Association of Social Workers-Missouri Chapter.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.