



SOUTH CAROLINA FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

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Executive Board

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January 31, 2024

Honorable Wm. Weston J. Newton
Chairman
South Carolina House of Representatives Judiciary Committee
Post Office Box 11867
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Dear Representative Newton,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the South Carolina Fraternal Order of Police to express our strong support for the swift passage of H.3247, also known as "Fargo's and Hyco's Law," through the committee and onto the floor of the South Carolina House of Representatives.

The tragic incident involving the recent loss of K9 Rico, a valued member of the State Law Enforcement Division's SWAT and K9 Tracking teams, highlights the urgent need for enhanced penalties in cases of teasing, maltreating, and injuring police dogs. K9 Rico's sacrifice during a 26-hour manhunt for a violent criminal in Charleston County underscores the risks and challenges faced by our law enforcement officers, both human and K9 alike.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the suspect, Ernest Burbage III, a convicted felon, not only endangered the lives of innocent individuals but also fatally shot K9 Rico. This incident is a stark reminder of the importance of protecting those who serve and protect our communities, including our dedicated K9 officers.

The proposed amendments to Article 11, Chapter 3, Title 47, seek to increase penalties for those who harm law enforcement K9s, sending a clear message that such acts will not be tolerated. Representative Neal Collins' efforts in naming this legislation "Fargo and Hyco's Law" pay homage to K9s who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, including Rico and Roscoe.

In light of this tragedy, it is imperative that we act decisively to strengthen the legal framework protecting our law enforcement partners, both human and K9. I urge you to use your influence to ensure H.3247 moves swiftly through the committee process and reaches the House floor for consideration.

The citizens of South Carolina rely on the commitment and dedication of our law enforcement officers, and it is our duty to provide them with the tools and legal support necessary to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Your support for H.3247 will not only honor the memory of K9 Rico but also contribute to the overall safety and well-being of our communities.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and thank you for your continued service to the people of South Carolina. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information or if I can be of assistance in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Blackmon", written over a white background.

John C. Blackmon