

Testimony- Capt. Jerry Desmond

First, I want to thank Chairman _____, and the committee for having us today to speak on this proposed bill. I also want to thank Representative Diana Urban for introducing bill 5703 and for all the support she has shown toward our police officers and others in our southeastern Connecticut communities. I have with me today one of my Lieutenants, Raymond Curioso, who will share his story with you in a moment.

The issue at hand that prompts this bill, is that as MERF employees, we believe that if an employee works for either enough years to be vested or for a full retirement term, then that employee has earned the right to receive a pension that is due. Currently, statute 7-439g states that if an employee dies prior to signing retirement papers, then the spouse will only receive 50% of the employee's projected pension that would have been coming to the employee if he or she had signed retirement papers on the day of death.

This statute, as it reads currently, does not reflect a spirit of appreciation for an employees years of service, nor does it seem fair to our workers. Although there are pension options that an employee chooses from upon retirement, it would only seem fair that if an employee passes away with enough earned time to collect a pension either right away or in the future, that the spouse should receive the maximum support due.

I have spoken to, and briefed Chief Salvatore, who is the legislative liaison of Connecticut Police Chiefs Association, on the bill. He has asked me to convey that the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association is behind the bill and supports the bill as it relates to the police officers throughout the state that are on the MERF retirement plan.