

# Labor and Public Employees Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-313  
**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE TO STUDY CANCER RELIEF BENEFITS FOR FIREFIGHTERS.  
**Vote Date:** 3/22/2022  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable  
**PH Date:** 3/8/2022  
**File No.:** 367

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### **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Labor and Public Employees Committee

### **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill ensures workers compensation coverage for work related to contracted cancer, wage replacement benefits, and life insurance coverage or welfare plan payments. This bill will give back to the workers who sacrificed their health to serve and protect their communities. This bill will adopt the recommendations set forth by the task force that studied cancer relief benefits for firefighters. This bill will fund and implement changes that the task force deems necessary to improve cancer relief benefits for firefighters, leading to a healthier population of firefighters that risked their lives in our state to preserve the safety of our citizens.

### **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

Connecticut Department of Labor, Commissioner, Dante Bartolomeo; has concerns about the practicality of this bill. DOL appreciates that the Task Force to Study Cancer Relief Benefits For Firefighters recommended clarifying CONN-OSHA's jurisdiction over volunteer fire departments and ambulance companies that is being proposed in sections 7,8, and 9 of the bill. Additionally, it is their experience that departments often see the safety and health financial value of multiple sets of gear and determine that value to be cost prohibitive, preventing implementation.

### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

CT AFL-CIO, President, Ed Hawthorne, supports the bill because it has been determined through significant research that firefighters face a considerable risk of increased incidents of cancer because of their employment. Without implementation of the task force

recommendations, firefighters will continue to face the unjust battles to be awarded the benefits they deserve when they receive a cancer diagnosis.

CEO 7710 Insurance Company, William J. Adamson, supports the intent of the bill but highlights revisions necessary to allow it to be successfully implemented for all stakeholder should the general assembly decide to move forward. Adamson advocates for an effective date to allow time for insurers to evaluate the alternative to cover cancer outside of workers' compensation. The bill should make the approved surcharge for cancer coverage applicable to the assigned risk plan for the firefighter class codes. They suggest limiting coverage for cancer for leaving the fire service to 5 years, and a maximum age limit of 65. The statute should require fire departments to cover days missed due to the illness via short term disability or self-insurance.

The following individuals support the bill largely because of their careers and affiliations. Firefighters risk their lives daily to protect and save their communities, and they deserve proper benefits for conditions including cancer developed in their line of work. Firefighters are significantly more susceptible to various cancers than the general population:

Legislative Representative for the Connecticut State Firefighters Association, John Carew,  
Member of the Firefighter Cancer Task Force, Richard Hart,  
Attorney for Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association, Meghan Lyon,  
Fire Chief and President of Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association, Marc Scrivener,  
Director of Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association, Jeff Tomchik,  
Member of SEIU, Stacy Zimmerman.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

American Property Casualty Insurance Association; opposes the bill. When the employer accepts complete responsibility for employee injuries and diseases, even in the absence of any fault by the employer, can only be sustained if coverage is strictly limited to workplace injuries and diseases. Workers' compensation cannot be used as a form of general health insurance or retirement benefits. Many people develop cancer when they are older, and the great majority of these cancers are not caused by the workplace.

Insurance Association of Connecticut, President, Eric George; opposes the bill. They dislike section 2, which would create a rebuttal presumption that certain cancers suffered by firefighters were caused by their employment for purposes of awarding workers' compensation benefits. Cancer is highly prevalent in communities, and it is axiomatic that not all cancers developed will be work-related.

Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, Ridgefield, CT, First Selectman Rudy Marconi, opposes the bill. The bill would significantly change existing workers' compensation laws thereby imposing crippling costs to municipalities. Additionally, it is a result of a task force that disregarded municipal input and ignores the bipartisan agreement that was reached in 2016 to assist firefighters diagnosed with cancer.

**Reported by: Molly Lukiwsky**

**Date: 3/29/2022**