

Appropriations Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5363

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ACCOUNT TO COMPENSATE FAMILIES OF LAW

Title: ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY.

Vote Date: 4/20/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/24/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

House Republican Caucus

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill would establish an account to compensate the families of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. This benefit would help families deal with the financial hardships associated with the loss of their family member.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[House Republican Caucus](#) – The House Republican Caucus submitted testimony in support of the measure. The testimony spoke to the low morale that sworn police officers are suffering due to the unintended but real consequences of the "police accountability" bill enacted. The testimony referenced the two officers who were shot and killed and a third officer severely injured in Bristol. The Caucus believes that the state shares a responsibility with municipalities to support law enforcement families "who have made the ultimate sacrifice, regardless of whether they are in fact state employees or not". The testimony stated that less than \$175,000 of the state's General Fund resources go toward supporting families of fallen and disabled police officers. The House Republican Caucus believes the families of those officers who gave the ultimate sacrifice deserve more support from the state. Several surrounding states have included provisions that allocate a one-time benefit to help families. This is in addition to the other benefits that may be available to families, which include worker's compensation benefits, education, or tuition assistance. The House Republican

Caucus believes that allocating a similar one-time benefit in Connecticut is important. Like the other states they reviewed, they believe the language of the bill should be expanded to include others who serve the public on the front lines. As an example, they cited the State of Maine, which includes firefighters, emergency medical service providers and corrections officers who have died in the line of duty in its assistance program.

[Senator Henri Martin, 31st District](#) – Senator Martin urged passage of the legislation. He spoke of the enormous outpouring of support for the families of the fallen Bristol Police officers. He added, however, that there is no guarantee that other communities will be in the position to take care of families of fallen officers the way Bristol did. Senator Martin stated his belief that through the establishment of this program, the state can make certain that families of the fallen police officers are taken care of when tragedies occur.

[Representative Mary Fortier, 79th District](#) – Rep. Fortier submitted testimony in support of the bill, She wrote that while the bill does not contain a dollar amount that HRO staff has looked at similar provisions in other New England states. She stated her belief that the families of fallen officers need to be fully compensated for "the tremendous sacrifice they have made".

[Derek Puorro, President, Council 4 AFSCME Public Safety Council](#) – Officer Puorro testified in support of the bill. He cited the killings of two Bristol Police officers and the financial losses experienced by their families. He stated that bill could be crafted to help their families take a less of a financial loss. He cited a report by the Office of Fiscal Analysis that stated that the current Massachusetts benefit for similar families is \$300,000. As inflation and general living costs have increased, Office Puorro believes that a higher is warranted in Connecticut. He offered the assistance and expertise of AFSCME in crafting the legislation.

[Susan Bradford](#) – Ms. Bradford offered her support of the legislation and the need to honor and support the families of fallen officers.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Susan Keane

Date: 5/7/23