
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5279 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORITY TO DECLARE THAT A FIREFIGHTER OR POLICE OFFICER DIED IN THE LINE OF DUTY.

SUMMARY

This bill generally allows a police or fire chief or emergency medical service (EMS) chief or administrative head to declare that a police officer, uniformed paid or volunteer firefighter, or EMS personnel died in the line of duty if the death was caused by a cardiac event, stroke, or pulmonary embolism within 24 hours after the officer, firefighter, or EMS personnel finished a shift or training. The chief or administrative head may do so unless a local charter or ordinance in effect on July 1, 2024, authorizes a different person or entity to make the determination.

The bill specifies that a chief's or administrative head's declaration must not be used as evidence for a workers' compensation claim.

Under the bill, a "police chief" is a law enforcement unit's chief law enforcement officer, the chief elected official of a municipal police department that does not have a chief law enforcement officer, or the emergency services and public protection commissioner for the State Police. An "EMS chief or administrative head" is the chief or head of the personnel's department, service, company, or EMS organization. "EMS personnel" is anyone certified to practice as an emergency medical responder, emergency medical technician, advanced emergency medical technician, or emergency medical services instructor or a paramedic.

*House Amendment "A" adds EMS personnel and eliminates the provision in the underlying bill under which the shift or training prior to death had to involve nonroutine or strenuous physical activity.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

BACKGROUND

Existing Federal Benefits

The surviving families of police officers, firefighters, and certain EMS personnel killed in the line of duty may be eligible for (1) cash benefits through the federal Public Safety Officers' Benefits program and (2) higher education assistance through the Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance program.

Existing State and Municipal Benefits

The surviving families of police officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty may be eligible for a range of state and municipal benefits, including:

1. tuition waivers from the state's colleges and universities (CGS §§ 10a-77(d), 10a-99(d) & 10a-105(e));
2. payments from their respective associations and the police and firefighter survivor's benefit fund, for those who participate (CGS §§ 3-122, 3-123 & 7-323e);
3. state health insurance benefits (CGS § 5-259(a)(6)); and
4. survivor pension benefits (CGS § 7-433b(a)).

Existing law allows municipalities to establish a program for surviving spouses of police officers, firefighters, or emergency medical technicians killed in the line of duty to abate all or a portion of the property taxes due on an eligible spouse's principal residence (CGS § 12-81x).

Related Bill

sSB 341 (File 219), favorably reported by the Public Safety and Security Committee, establishes the "Fallen Officer Fund" to provide, within available appropriations, a lump sum death benefit totaling \$100,000 to a surviving family member or beneficiary of a police officer who was killed in the line of duty or sustained injuries that were the direct and proximate cause of the officer's death.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 25 Nay 0 (03/19/2024)

Planning and Development Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 20 Nay 0 (04/15/2024)