

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 24-16—sHB 5279

*Public Safety and Security Committee
Planning and Development Committee*

**AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORITY TO DECLARE THAT A
FIREFIGHTER, POLICE OFFICER OR EMERGENCY MEDICAL
SERVICE PERSONNEL DIED IN THE LINE OF DUTY**

SUMMARY: This act generally allows police chiefs, fire chiefs, and emergency medical service (EMS) chiefs and administrative heads to, respectively, 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 individual finished a shift or training. The chief or administrative head may do so unless a local charter or ordinance in effect on October 1, 2024, authorizes a different person or entity to make the determination. The chief or administrative head can only make these declarations for individuals in their department, law enforcement unit, service, company, or EMS organization, as applicable.

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

Under the act, 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 EMS 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 licensed paramedic.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 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

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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 the (a) emergency services and public protection commissioner related to their respective associations and (b) police and firefighter survivor's benefit fund, for participating municipalities (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)).

Additionally, 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).