
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5279

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 to declare that a police officer or uniformed paid or volunteer firefighter 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 or firefighter finished a shift or training that involved nonroutine or strenuous activity. The police or fire chief 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 police or fire chief'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.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024

BACKGROUND

Existing Federal Benefits

The surviving families of police officers and firefighters 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, -123 & 7-323e);
3. state health insurance benefits (CGS § 5-259(a)(6));
4. a property tax abatement (CGS § 12-81x); and
5. survivor pension benefits (CGS § 7-433b(a)).

Related Bill

sSB 341, 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)