



Senate Fiscal Agency
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

BILL



ANALYSIS

Telephone: (517) 373-5383
Fax: (517) 373-1986

House Bill 4382 (Substitute H-2 as reported without amendment)

Sponsor: Representative James McNutt

House Committee: Appropriations

Senate Committee: Appropriations

CONTENT

The bill would create the "Police Officer's and Fire Fighter's Survivor Tuition Act" to provide tuition at State institutions of higher education for children and surviving spouses of State or local Michigan police officers and fire fighters who had been killed in the line of duty.

Under the bill, a police officer's or fire fighter's death would have to be from the direct result of a traumatic injury incurred in the line of duty and not from stress, strain, or occupational disease to qualify a surviving spouse or child for tuition benefits.

Beginning in the 1996-1997 academic year, tuition at a State institution of higher education would be paid for by the Department of State Police for each child and surviving spouse of a Michigan police officer or Michigan fire fighter if all of the following conditions were met:

- The child or spouse was admitted to a program of study leading to a degree or certificate.
- The child or spouse was a legal resident of the State at least the 12 months prior to application.
- The child or spouse provided evidence to the Department of State Police that he or she met tuition program requirements.
- If a child survivor, he or she applied for the tuition program prior to age 21.
- The child or spouse was certified by the school's financial aid officer as needing a tuition waiver in order to meet educational expenses.
- The child or spouse maintained satisfactory academic progress.
- The child or spouse had not achieved a bachelor's degree.

The Department of State Police would be responsible for approving tuition waiver applications and notifying State institutions of higher learning when an application was approved. The Department of State Police would be required to reimburse each institution for the total amount of tuition waived during the immediately preceding fiscal year.

The bill also would require the Legislature to appropriate the funds necessary to implement the bill.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill could result in added GF/GP costs of approximately \$225,000 annually to the Department of State Police, depending on a number of factors. There have been 57 Michigan police officers killed in the line of duty since 1986. The 57 police officers left behind 36 spouses and 61 children. Under the bill, each of the 36 spouses would be eligible for a tuition waiver. Of the 61 surviving children, 12 could be currently eligible for the tuition waiver and 36 could eventually become

eligible. Though it is not possible to predict the number of potential eligible persons who are survivors of a police officer killed in the line of duty, \$125,000 to \$150,000 is the estimated annual cost of tuition payments to survivors of police officers under the bill.

Concerning Michigan fire fighters killed in the line of duty, few biographical data exist, although it is known that 74 have been killed in the line of duty since 1972 and 26 since 1986. Since the number of Michigan fire fighter deaths in the line of duty have approximated half that of Michigan police officers, it is assumed that tuition participation and costs would be approximately half of that for the survivors of police officers, or approximately \$75,000 per year.

The Department of State Police would incur certain administrative costs relating to the administration of the bill's provision and these costs could be absorbed within existing Department resources.

In addition, the Governor's FY 1996-97 budget recommendation has included \$500,000 in GF/GP funds for a tuition program for children and surviving spouses of Michigan police officers.

Date Completed: 4-29-96

Fiscal Analyst: B. Baker

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