

HCS HB 760 -- FIREFIGHTERS

SPONSOR: Roden

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Public Safety by a vote of 10 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 8 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 760.

This bill allows for the creation of a "Voluntary Firefighter Cancer Benefits Trust" and it creates a refundable tax credit for those contributing to the Trust. Under the bill, any municipality or special district that employs firefighters who meet certain qualifications may make contributions to a Voluntary Firefighter Cancer Benefits Trust. The Board of Trustees of any trust created for the purposes of this bill is subject to the Sunshine Law. The Trust is then required to make payments to covered individuals based upon the type of cancer with which the covered individual was diagnosed. The maximum amount that may be paid out from the Trust for a particular cancer diagnosis in a covered individual is \$249,000. Benefits may be reduced by 25% if the covered individual used a tobacco product within the 5 years immediately preceding the cancer diagnosis and the tobacco use was directly related to the individual's cancer.

Any Trust created for the purposes of this bill may accept or apply for grants or donations from any private or public source. Furthermore, any such trust may apply for grants from the State Fire Marshal.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that a similar bill has been introduced since 2017. It creates a trust fund for firefighters who contract certain cancers as a result of their job. Many have ended up with respiratory issues, prostate cancer, or colon cancer. This is modeled after Colorado legislation and it allows for an opt-in for a department to contribute to the fund. It is next to impossible to get a workers' compensation claim for a cancer diagnosis. Many of the firefighters are battling cancer by the age of 50. When a firefighter gets cancer, the health insurance will still cover the costs for medical care; the trust starts to pick up the other costs you start seeing over the years, normally covered under workers' compensation. Payment to a trust would be less for a fire

department than it would be if it were an increased premium to workers' compensation. If every department participated in the trust, the reserve would have to be around \$3 million. They are trying to resolve whether a firefighter or the community could buy in for the firefighters.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Roden; and the Fire Service Alliance.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that they would like to make the trust the exclusive remedy for firefighters fighting cancer and making the trust a viable option.

Testifying on the bill was the Missouri Intergovernmental Risk Management Association.