

HCS SS SCS SBs 119 & 120 -- PUBLIC SAFETY

SPONSOR: Luetkemeyer

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 8 to 1, with 4 present. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 7 to 0 with 1 present.

This bill modifies provisions relating to public safety.

Please see the Summary Sheet for a detailed list of the additional language added to the House Substitute.

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

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that removing the salary cap for Kansas City police officers is a critical tool in strengthening officer hiring and retention. Over the last several years, hundreds of police officers have left the force, resulting in serious staffing concerns. Kansas City lags behind in officer retention rates; this bill allows for more flexible and competitive hiring practices. Further, this bill has provisions that provide critical support for mental health issues faced by first responders in the course of their duty. First responders, which includes firefighters and telecommunicators, are deeply effected by what they encounter in their line of work, and any support for mental health or PTSD treatment is critical.

Testifying in person for the bill were Senator Luetkemeyer; Missouri 911 Directors Association; Missouri Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association; Missouri Chapter of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials; MO 911 Service Board; MO Ambulance Association; and KCPD Board of Police Commissioners.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that the specific provisions relating to workers' compensation benefits lower the standard to being based on a changeable manual and an expansive definition. This relinquishes control on what may be considered compensable claims. The financial impact of lowering this threshold has the potential to put serious financial strain on municipalities. Opponents caution against unintended or unknown consequences of the expansion and loosening of workers' compensation provisions. Other opponents say that the provisions

of this bill are too expansive and varied. The several provisions of this bill would be better served broken out into different bills. Further, provisions relating to workers' compensation benefits for first responders as defined under the bill are too narrow. Police and firefighters are not the only workers that experience the trauma described; teachers, hospital workers, and other front-line workers experience this same type of trauma as well.

Testifying in person against the bill were Arnie C. Dienoff; Patrick Bonnot, MIRMA; MO Self Insurers Association; MO Association of Counties.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.