



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

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Vice Chair
Joint Committee on Higher Education
Committees:
Environment and Natural Resources
State Administration
and Regulatory Oversight
Elder Affairs

October 31, 2023

Representative Kenneth Gordon, Chair
Joint Committee on Public Service
State House, Room 156
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Michael D. Brady, Chair
Joint Committee on Public Service
State House, Room 416-A
Boston, MA 02133

RE: H.2533/S.1652, *An Act relative to death benefits to surviving spouses of call and volunteer firefighters.*

Dear Chair Gordon and Chair Brady,

I write to you in support of my sponsored legislation H.2533, and its Senate counterpart filed by Senator Eldridge S.1652, *An Act relative to death benefits to surviving spouses of call and volunteer firefighters*. This legislation would correct errors and omissions from Acts of 2014, Chapter 165, section 73 by amending Chapter 32B, section 9 1/2 of the General Laws. In doing so, it would provide a local option that would have to be approved at town meeting, which would improve some benefits for families of fallen call and volunteer firefighters.

The Commonwealth relies on all of our firefighters to protect property and life. In doing their job, firefighters risk their lives to protect their communities. When those who serve the Commonwealth fall in the line of duty, I strongly feel that the community has an obligation to care for them and their family in return. This bill would help these families in three ways:

- Require the municipality where the officer served to charge the surviving spouse the retiree rate instead of 100 percent of the premium.
- Remove the words “continue to,” allowing the surviving spouse and children to participate in the insurance regardless of whether they were participants at the time of the officer’s death.
- Allow children over the age of 19 and who are physically or mentally incapacitated to stay on the fallen officer’s insurance.

These families deserve robust death benefits, but offering such benefits also helps the Commonwealth. When going into a dangerous line of work, any reasonable person’s first thought is whether their loved ones would be cared for in the worst-case scenario. At a time when labor is in short supply, such benefits attract qualified individuals to work as firefighters and help retain those that are already in these roles.

There is no financial cost to the Commonwealth and the legislation is endorsed by the Massachusetts Call and Volunteer Firefighters’ Association.

Thank you for considering this written testimony and my request that the committee favorably report this bill without delay. I look forward to any opportunity to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carmine L. Gentile", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carmine L. Gentile
State Representative
13th Middlesex District