

Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5403 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR SURVIVORS OF UNPAID VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS, CORRECTION OFFICERS AND

Title: STATE MARSHALS.

Vote Date: 3/17/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/5/2026

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The Public Safety and Security Committee introduced this proposal with the intent of providing health insurance coverage to the survivors of unpaid volunteer firefighters and corrections officers, as well as state marshals. Arguments have been made that if the unthinkable occurs, surviving families should not be burdened with losing their health insurance coverage. It has also been noted that with retention and recruitment rates for these positions being so low, incentives and recognition like this are necessary. This bill would allow surviving families to be guaranteed access to health insurance coverage.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

In the JFS language, Section one adds language to clarify the procedure for obtaining coverage for certain survivors, expanding the bill to include nonstate public employers in Connecticut. Section 2 is amended to provide insurance coverage to survivors of state marshals under the condition of dying while serving a temporary restraining order.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Scanlon, Sean, State Comptroller-Office of the State Comptroller:](#) Comptroller Scanlon stated how he supports the inclusion of volunteer firefighters. In addition, he explained how under section 5-259 of the general statutes, family members of correctional officers killed are already supplied coverage for the state employee health plan because of their eligibility for benefits under section 5-144. Comptroller Scanlon also said that marshals and their dependents were recently added to the State Employee Health Plan but since they are not technically state employees, the benefits of 5-259 are not applicable to them. But he states, given that they are now covered in the plan and that we

would not want existing benefits taken away, Comptroller Scanlon suggests the committee add marshals to 5-259. Comptroller Scanlon describes how this issue is professionally and personally important to him, as he comes from a family of first responders, and as comptroller, he runs the largest retirement and health plans for police officers and firefighters in Connecticut.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Quinn, Arthur-Connecticut State Marshal: Marshal Arthur stated how his job has become increasingly dangerous in recent years due to the rise of threats when completing evictions, capias arrests, serving orders of protection, civil protection orders, and collection actions. He explained how in October 2009 he was shot twice when attempting to take a subject into custody, causing him to be out of work and unable to provide for his family. He states this situation opened his eyes to the possibility of not surviving and how he, as well as other officers' families, would be left without health insurance.

Strano III, Santo, M.: Being a previous volunteer firefighter, Mr. Strano stated that serving was not only a privilege but also very demanding. He states that due to the difficult nature of balancing volunteer and main career responsibilities, it is difficult to retain volunteers. Therefore, Mr. Strano explained how incentives like the one in this bill will aid with retention.

Carew, John, Legislative Representative-CSFA: Mr. Carew stated that the grief of family members who lose their loved ones to the risks of their duties as volunteer firefighters is immeasurable, and legislation cannot undo this, but rather legislation should supply financial support. Mr. Carew believes that surviving family members should not have to worry about losing their health insurance coverage. He adds that supplying health insurance is a principle component of honoring the sacrifices made and guarantees that the families are supported regardless. He also states that this legislation can also serve as a meaningful incentive when retention and recruitment rates are low.

Adams, Michael, Legislative Assistant-AFSCME Council 4: Mr. Adams stated that this bill sends a clear message to the officers who serve Connecticut and their families that if the unthinkable occurs in the line of duty, their loved ones will be taken care of. He explained how this matters for corrections officers, as it removes a worry since it supplies stability and respect. Mr. Adams described the work that correction officers complete as difficult and risky, which he sees within his own family, as his sister is married to a corrections officer and also works as a teacher in one of their correction facilities. As a soon-to-be mother; these exact thoughts rummage in his and his sisters head. Mr Adams stated how this legislation recognizes the sacrifice of these correction officers and their families.

Morante, Rosemary: Through Ms. Morante's role as vice chairperson of the Plainville Town Council, she has been shown the importance of local volunteer firefighters. She explained how attraction and retention of volunteer firefighters have decreased and incentives are needed in order to correct this. Ms. Morante believes that the health insurance benefit for survivor families of volunteers who lose their lives in the line of duty in this bill supplies further recognition of the service and value that volunteer firefighters supply to Connecticut.

Mennillo, Mark, Mr-Dept. of Corrections Local 38: Mr. Mennillo stated that as an officer for nine years, he has made many sacrifices that affected his and his family's health & well-being. He believes that the least the state can do for members' and volunteers' sacrifice is to show gratitude and respect to the surviving family.

Mezick, Brian, President-State Marshal Association of CT: Mr. Mezick stated that state marshals often enter properties and homes where circumstances are unknown

and tensions are high, which is a concern as state marshals have been shot and put in environments with explosive devices while on duty. Mr. Mezick believes that if a state marshal is killed on duty, their family should not lose health insurance. Mr. Mezick also explained that recruiting difficulties have increased and this legislation would serve as an incentive.

[LaFemina, Miles, Correction Officer-AFSCME Local 1565](#): Mr. LaFemina stated how violence, assaults, and life-threatening situations are a reality of correction officers' & volunteer firefighters' & EMTs' professions. Mr. LaFemina explained that if they were to lose their lives on duty, their loved ones should not be subjected to loose health insurance. Mr. LaFemina believes that this legislation supplies recognition to the sacrifice that not only these professionals make but also their families make as well. Mr. LaFemina described how for many families, health insurance is one of the most crucial forms of security, and losing it during a period of financial uncertainty and grief would worsen an already tragic situation. Mr. LaFemina stated how this bill sends a highly prevalent message to citizens serving in public safety roles: that Connecticut recognizes the risks they take and will protect their families if devastation occurs. For correction officers, he stated that this reassurance tells them that if they make the ultimate sacrifice, their loved ones will be protected.

[Anonymous 46](#): Supports this legislation for reasons unstated.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Gara, Betsy, Executive Director—COST](#): Ms. Gara stated how the unfunded mandate imposed on municipalities undermines their ability to manage health insurance costs, which are vastly increasing. Due to these increasing costs affecting the delivery of local services, she believes that the state must refrain from expanding or creating new unfunded mandates, as they impose huge burdens on small towns and taxpayers, making it more difficult to supply critical programs to residents.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

[Muszynski, Mike-CCM](#): Mr. Muszynski stated how the CCM would like the committee to consider the unique impact on volunteer fire departments that run independently from their host municipalities. He argues that if there is no clear language clarifying who bears the financial responsibility within these situations, towns risk being burdened with costs for citizens they do not directly manage or employ. He continues that mandating employer-funded coverage in these instances forms an unnecessary and redundant taxpayer expense without supplying a new or better benefit to these families. CCM is also requesting that municipalities be granted the freedom to supply this coverage through their own existing plans or private carriers, as opposed to being forced into the state's Partnership Plan. Through allowing departments to provide similar benefits outside the Partnership Plan, cities and towns can manage costs more effectively while guaranteeing that survivors receive the care they deserve.

Reported by: Emma Rybacki, Clerk
Olivia Buczak, Assist. Clerk

Date: 3/26/26