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State of Minnesota

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-SECOND SESSION

H. F. No. 973

02/10/2021

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The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy

1.1 A bill for an act
1.2 relating to public safety; establishing a program to provide payments to firefighters
1.3 with cancer or heart disease, counseling for firefighters, and firefighter training;
1.4 appropriating money; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter
1.5 299A.

1.6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.7 Section 1. 299A.477] HOMETOWN HEROES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

1.8 Subdivision 1. Definitions. (a) The definitions in this subdivision apply to this section.

1.9 (b) "Firefighter" means a volunteer, paid on-call, part-time, or full-time firefighter serving
1.10 a general population within the boundaries of the state.

1.11 (c) "Minnesota Firefighter Initiative" means a collaborative that is established by major
1.12 fire service organizations in Minnesota, is a nonprofit organization, and is tax exempt under
1.13 section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

1.14 Subd. 2. Program established. The commissioner of public safety shall award a grant
1.15 to the Minnesota Firefighter Initiative to administer a hometown heroes assistance program
1.16 for Minnesota firefighters. The Minnesota Firefighter Initiative shall use the grant funds:

1.17 (1) to provide a onetime critical illness monetary support payment to each firefighter
1.18 who is diagnosed with cancer or heart disease and who applies for the payment. Monetary
1.19 support shall be provided according to the requirements in subdivision 3;

1.20 (2) to develop a counseling program customized to address emotional trauma experienced
1.21 by firefighters and to offer all firefighters in the state up to five counseling sessions per year
1.22 under the customized program, provided by trained counselors;

2.1 (3) to offer firefighters with additional needs counseling services in addition to the five
2.2 counseling sessions offered to all firefighters;

2.3 (4) to develop, annually update, and annually provide to all firefighters in the state:

2.4 (i) at least two hours of training on cancer, heart disease, and emotional trauma as causes
2.5 of illness and death for firefighters;

2.6 (ii) steps and best practices for firefighters to limit the occupational risks of cancer, heart
2.7 disease, and emotional trauma; and

2.8 (iii) ways for firefighters to address occupation-related emotional trauma and promote
2.9 emotional wellness.

2.10 The training shall be presented by firefighters who attend an additional course to prepare
2.11 them to serve as trainers; and

2.12 (5) for administrative and overhead costs of the Minnesota Firefighter Initiative associated
2.13 with conducting the activities in clauses (1) to (4).

2.14 Subd. 3. **Critical illness monetary support program.** (a) The Minnesota Firefighter
2.15 Initiative shall establish and administer a critical illness monetary support program which
2.16 shall provide a onetime support payment of up to \$30,000 to each firefighter diagnosed with
2.17 cancer or heart disease. A firefighter may apply for monetary support from the program in
2.18 the form specified by the Minnesota Firefighter Initiative if the firefighter has a current
2.19 diagnosis of cancer or heart disease or was diagnosed with cancer or heart disease in the
2.20 year preceding the firefighter's application. A firefighter's application for monetary support
2.21 must include documentation from the firefighter's health care provider of the firefighter's
2.22 diagnosis of cancer or heart disease. The Minnesota Firefighter Initiative shall establish
2.23 criteria to guide disbursement of monetary support payments under this program and shall
2.24 scale the amount of monetary support provided to each firefighter according to the severity
2.25 of the firefighter's diagnosis.

2.26 (b) The commissioner of public safety may access the accounts of the critical illness
2.27 monetary support program and may conduct periodic audits of the program to ensure that
2.28 payments are being made in compliance with this section and disbursement criteria
2.29 established by the Minnesota Firefighter Initiative.

2.30 Subd. 4. **Money from nonstate sources.** The commissioner of public safety may accept
2.31 contributions from nonstate sources to supplement state appropriations for the hometown
2.32 heroes assistance program. Contributions received under this subdivision are appropriated

3.1 to the commissioner for the grant to the Minnesota Firefighter Initiative for purposes of this
3.2 section.

3.3 Sec. 2. **APPROPRIATION.**

3.4 \$..... in fiscal year 2022 is appropriated from the general fund to the commissioner of
3.5 public safety for a grant for the hometown heroes assistance program under Minnesota
3.6 Statutes, section 299A.477.