

House Finance and Appropriations Committee  
May 16, 2017  
Testimony on HB 27  
Cyndie and Seamus Culligan

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 27. My name is Cyndie Culligan and my husband is Seamus Culligan. My husband is a very loved kind hearted man who helps everyone and anyone! A neighbor gets divorced, he plows her driveway and cuts her grass. 3 widows on our street, he helped them all the time with various duties. One of which before her husband passed away, Seamus was over there taking care of him on his death bed. Without hesitation, Seamus went to local grocers and hardware stores for donations of energy bars, drinks and hepa masks and then drove through the night to help with the rescue at ground zero. Seamus loves people and loves to help. This is why he became a firefighter paramedic and puts himself in dangerous situations for complete strangers.

Seamus is also a 39 year old veteran Willoughby firefighter who was diagnosed with brain cancer Jan 5th. Just one day after everyone in the state house made the smart informed decision that this should become a bill.

With this being said, I cannot understand why you would want to deny a fireman compensation for a on the job hazard that caused him a diagnosis of brain cancer.

Webster's definition of Injury is: an instance of being injured, harmed, or damaged.

In this instance, my husband was injured, harmed and damaged from his on the job duties.

This is a horrible injury that cannot be denied. Our family is in extreme heartache. Our children have to watch their father go through this agonizing ordeal. I have to watch my husband struggle to at times remember our childrens' names and birthdates. I have to help him to strengthen his memory, physical body and his drive to carry on! Yes I have to make sure my husband doesn't give up!!! At the same time I am juggling appointments, prescriptions, emergency visits, all the normal dailys with the children and the house. Yes that's a big one. So I am picking up the slack, and where I cannot, plumbing, car repairs, like he once did for me, I have to hire someone. That is a cost, and that brings me to bills. I have to juggle bills! Where am I going to come up with our bill money now?! When he is our main source of income If he is denied workers comp well I just don't know!

I have to nurse my husband back to health while worrying about workman's comp.

**THIS IS WHY I STAND BEFORE YOU NOW!**

If a factory worker breaks the rules and loses a limb at work he still receives workmans comp. Are firefighter families worth any less than any other career? Why are we not entitled to get compensation? Firefighting is one of the most dangerous and hazardous jobs and our men and

woman put their lives on the line to save others. And you are considering denying them this basic compensation?

Mr. Chairman I'm asking the question: why is the majority going after firefighters in this legislation? The men and women who run into burning buildings while others are running away deserve respect admiration and support from those in government who protect our families and our communities every day. This legislation as it's written requires the courts to presume that any exposure to chemicals carcinogens or other cancer causing agents did not cause cancer unless a preponderance of scientific evidence suggests differently. How is my husband, or for that matter any other firefighter, when they become ill going to do the necessary research to determine which study is valid, which one makes sense, and which one provides clear and convincing evidence. Making this requirement a burden for firefighters who already did their duty, who already saved lives, who already put themselves at risk for the safety of our community is not good policy nor politics. Too many politicians want to come and take photographs during elections but what happens the rest of the year? Are you going to take a picture with a firefighter who is fighting with the municipal government who suggests that there is not a preponderance of evidence or scientific proof? Further, the statute of limitations was rolled back from 24 months to one year. This was not the intention of the legislature just last year.

Our ask is simple: don't make it harder for firefighters to get treated when they are putting their lives at risk. Don't make it harder for them to make a worker's compensation claim or presume that there is minimal risk in the jobs that they do on a daily basis. Take out the rebuttable presumption and return it to the original language.

My husband followed all the necessary protocols and attended all the safety classes to insure his safety, yet here he is..... Here I am.....talking to you today pleading with you to have the compassion you had when you first put this law into effect.

Hello, my name is Seamus Culligan. Firefighter paramedic from Willoughby. Please consider not changing this bill. You stood by us the first time around. Please continue to do so.

Thank you