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Ohio Senate

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Sponsor Testimony on Senate Bill 296
Senate Finance Committee
15 May 2018

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 296. This legislation will extend benefits to the families of Ohio's law enforcement and fire fighters who have died in the line of duty. Those who choose to don the uniform are not alone; their families also stand with them, making countless sacrifices in the service of our state and communities. It's time for to Ohio change how we support the families of our fallen heroes.

Under current law, survivors receive 100 percent of the deceased officer's benefits until the first eligible date of retirement, either 25 years of service or 48 years old. This bill would extend these necessary benefits to the age of full retirement which is 33 years of service or 70 years old. At that point, the benefits will be reduced to 75 percent of the total monthly salary as opposed to the 50 percent that is current law.

In addition to extending the length of time families receive full benefits, they will also be eligible to obtain healthcare from the state. This bill would treat the immediate family (husbands, wives, and children) as if they were employees of the State of Ohio by allowing them to obtain health, eye, and dental insurance.

This legislation is supported by the Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.) and the Fraternal Order of Police. Together, we see this common-sense change to Ohio's law as a way to help ease the financial burden that may arise from the death of a spouse.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.