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Sponsor Testimony on HB 513
Senate Ways and Means Committee
November 28, 2018

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thank you for hearing sponsor testimony on House Bill 513.

House Bill 513 will enhance the homestead exemption for surviving spouses of public service officers killed in the line of duty. The bill states that a “public service officer” is defined as a peace officer, firefighter, EMT, or paramedic. The surviving spouse would receive, upon receipt of an application, a \$50,000 tax exemption on one homestead owned by the surviving spouse, rather than the current \$25,000 exemption. The application must include a letter from a retirement or pension fund and/or from the chief officer of the department or agency which employed the public service officer that affirms that the death of the public service officer happened in the line of duty.

Additionally, the bill clarifies that to qualify, a public service officer must either be killed in the line or duty or as a result of a fatal injury sustained while in the line of duty. “Killed in the line of duty” is defined in ORC 742.63 as “Death in the line of duty or death from injury sustained in the line of duty, including heart attack or other fatal injury or illness caused while in the line of duty”. This exemption is retroactive, so as long as the individual fills out the proper paperwork, they can receive this tax exemption regardless of when their spouse passed away. Finally, this exemption would continue for the surviving spouse until his or her death or remarriage.

Our offices have been working with Franklin County Auditor Clarence Mingo and his office to draft this legislation. Auditor Mingo, in a recent dispatch

article, referenced research his office has conducted on this topic and the necessity of this legislation. This article can be found here for your reference <http://www.dispatch.com/news/20180208/auditor-wants-tax-break-for-spouses-of-first-responders-killed-on-job>.

All of us who work in the Statehouse walk by a beautiful monument in the Capital rotunda. The monument is known as “The Lincoln and Soldier Monument”. Upon that monument are inscribed the words President Lincoln spoke during his second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865...“To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan,”

With these words, President Lincoln affirmed the government’s obligation to care for those injured during the war and to provide for the families of those who perished on the battlefield.

There could be no more appropriate description of the spirit and goal of HB513; to provide some monetary relief to the spouses of our first responders who make the ultimate sacrifice while protecting and serving the public.

In 2017, Ohio lost five public service officers in the line of duty. This year we lost two additional brave officers in Westerville while responding to a 9-1-1 call. This bill is about giving back to those who make that ultimate sacrifice by providing relief to their grieving spouses during a difficult time. To honor the men and women who run towards danger and put themselves in harm’s way, day after day, we ask for your favorable consideration of this bill. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, Rep. Brenner and I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.