

By: Representative Carpenter

To: Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 1403

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 45-2-1, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
 2 PROVIDE THAT THE DEFINITION OF CAUSE OF DEATH FOR THE LAW
 3 ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND FIRE FIGHTERS DEATH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
 4 INCLUDES ANY CAUSE OF DEATH THAT WOULD BE COVERED UNDER THE
 5 SAFEGUARDING AMERICA'S FIRST RESPONDERS ACT OF 2020; AND FOR
 6 RELATED PURPOSES.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

8 **SECTION 1.** Section 45-2-1, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
 9 amended as follows:

10 45-2-1. (1) Whenever used in this section, the term:

11 (a) "Covered individual" means a law enforcement
 12 officer or firefighter, including volunteer firefighters, as
 13 defined in this section when employed by an employer as defined in
 14 this section; it does not include employees of independent
 15 contractors.

16 (b) "Employer" means a state board, commission,
 17 department, division, bureau or agency, or a county, municipality
 18 or other political subdivision of the state, which employs,
 19 appoints or otherwise engages the services of covered individuals.



20 (c) "Firefighter" means an individual who is trained
21 for the prevention and control of loss of life and property from
22 fire or other emergencies, who is assigned to firefighting
23 activity, and is required to respond to alarms and perform
24 emergency actions at the location of a fire, hazardous materials
25 or other emergency incident.

26 (d) "Law enforcement officer" means any lawfully sworn
27 officer or employee of the state or any political subdivision of
28 the state whose duties require the officer or employee to
29 investigate, pursue, apprehend, arrest, transport or maintain
30 custody of persons who are charged with, suspected of committing,
31 or convicted of a crime, whether the officer is on regular duty on
32 full-time status, an auxiliary or reserve officer, or is serving
33 on a temporary or part-time status.

34 (e) "Cause of death" means any cause of death that
35 would be covered under the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act of
36 1976 * * *, the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act of 2003,
37 generally codified at 42 USCS Chapter 46, or the Safeguarding
38 America's First Responders Act of 2020.

39 (2) (a) The Department of Public Safety shall make a
40 payment, as provided in this section, in the amount of One Hundred
41 Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) when a covered individual, while
42 engaged in the performance of the person's official duties, dies
43 or receives accidental or intentional bodily injury that results
44 in the loss of the covered individual's life and such death is the



45 result of a covered cause of death, provided that the death is not
46 the result of suicide and that the bodily injury is not
47 intentionally self-inflicted.

48 (b) The payment provided for in this subsection shall
49 be made to the beneficiary who was designated in writing by the
50 covered individual, signed by the covered individual and delivered
51 to the employer during the covered individual's lifetime. If no
52 such designation is made, then the payment shall be made to the
53 surviving child or children and spouse in equal portions, and if
54 there is no surviving child or spouse, then to the parent or
55 parents. If a beneficiary is not designated and there is no
56 surviving child, spouse or parent, then the payment shall be made
57 to the covered individual's estate.

58 (c) The payment made in this subsection is in addition
59 to any workers' compensation or pension benefits and is exempt
60 from the claims and demands of creditors of the covered
61 individual.

62 (3) (a) There is established in the State Treasury a
63 special fund to be known as the Law Enforcement Officers and Fire
64 Fighters Death Benefits Trust Fund. The trust fund shall be
65 funded by an initial appropriation of Two Hundred Thousand Dollars
66 (\$200,000.00), and shall be comprised of any additional funds made
67 available by the Legislature or by donation, contribution, gift or
68 any other source.



69 (b) The State Treasurer shall invest the monies of the
70 trust fund in any of the investments authorized for the funds of
71 the Public Employees' Retirement System under Section 25-11-121,
72 and those investments shall be subject to the limitations
73 prescribed by Section 25-11-121.

74 (c) Unexpended amounts remaining in the trust fund at
75 the end of the state fiscal year shall not lapse into the State
76 General Fund, and any income earned on amounts in the trust fund
77 shall be deposited to the credit of the trust fund.

78 (4) The Department of Public Safety shall be responsible for
79 the management of the trust fund and the disbursement of death
80 benefits authorized under this section. The Department of Public
81 Safety shall adopt rules and regulations necessary to implement
82 and standardize the payment of death benefits under this section,
83 to administer the trust fund created by this section and to carry
84 out the purposes of this section.

85 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
86 and after its passage.

