HOUSE BILL NO. 1406

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

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

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

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

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

(b) "Employer" means a state board, commission, department, division, bureau or agency, or a county, municipality or other political subdivision of the state, which employs, appoints or otherwise engages the services of covered individuals.
(c) "Firefighter" means an individual who is trained for the prevention and control of loss of life and property from fire or other emergencies, who is assigned to firefighting activity, and is required to respond to alarms and perform emergency actions at the location of a fire, hazardous materials or other emergency incident.

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


(2) (a) The Department of Public Safety shall make a payment, as provided in this section, in the amount of One Hundred Thousand Dollars ($100,000.00) when a covered individual, while engaged in the performance of the person's official duties, dies or receives accidental or intentional bodily injury that results in the loss of the covered individual's life and such death is the
result of a covered cause of death, provided that the death is not
the result of suicide and that the bodily injury is not
intentionally self-inflicted.

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

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

(3) (a) There is established in the State Treasury a special fund to be known as the Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters Death Benefits Trust Fund. The trust fund shall be funded by an initial appropriation of Two Hundred Thousand Dollars ($200,000.00), and shall be comprised of any additional funds made available by the Legislature or by donation, contribution, gift or any other source.
(b) The State Treasurer shall invest the monies of the trust fund in any of the investments authorized for the funds of the Public Employees' Retirement System under Section 25-11-121, and those investments shall be subject to the limitations prescribed by Section 25-11-121.

(c) Unexpended amounts remaining in the trust fund at the end of the state fiscal year shall not lapse into the State General Fund, and any income earned on amounts in the trust fund shall be deposited to the credit of the trust fund. However, any unexpended amounts transferred in accordance with Section 2 of this act and remaining in the trust fund at the end of the state fiscal year shall lapse into the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

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

SECTION 2. Upon the effective date of this act, the State Fiscal Officer shall transfer the sum of Five Million Dollars ($5,000,000.00) from the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters Death Benefits Trust Fund.
SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.