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REVISE POLICE OFFICER AND FIREFIGHTER SURVIVORS' TUITION ACT

House Bill 4608

Sponsor: Rep. Deborah Cherry

Committee: Appropriations

Complete to 5-3-99

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4608 AS INTRODUCED 4-29-99

House Bill 4608 would amend the Police Officer's and Fire Fighter's Survivor Tuition Act to eliminate the student's financial need provision, and to require that education institutions participating in the program be reimbursed each term or semester rather than annually.

Currently, in order to receive a tuition waiver, applicants must meet criteria for financial need, as certified by the financial aid officer of the institution of higher education. In determining financial need, death benefits attributable to the officer's or firefighter's death are not counted as "family income", if other family income is below 400 percent of the poverty level, as determined under federal poverty guidelines. House Bill 4608 would remove this provision.

In addition, under current law, the Department of State Police, which administers the program, reimburses each state institution of higher education for the total amount of tuition waived during the immediately preceding fiscal year. House Bill 4608 would require the department to reimburse the institutions immediately after the completion of each term or semester.

Finally, the bill would expand the definition of "Michigan firefighter" to mean those paid or volunteering to provide fire suppression and other fire-related services of the state or of a city, township, village, county, authority, or other governmental unit. Currently the law specifies only a city, township, village, or county.

[Since 1996 when the legislature passed House Bill 4382 (Public Act 195 of 1996), Michigan has provided a higher education tuition waiver to the survivors of fallen police officers and firefighters. At that time, Michigan was one of only five states that lacked a tuition waiver for dependents of police officers killed in the line of duty. According to the House Legislative Analysis Section's analysis of House Bill 4382 dated 6-11-96, in the nine-year period from 1985-93, thirty-six married police officers were killed in the line of duty in Michigan, and they were survived by 61 children. From 1986-95, twenty-six firefighters were killed and the number of their survivors was unknown.]

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In addition, the Department of Military Affairs administers a tuition grant program for the survivors of military veterans, a program established by Public Act 245 of 1935, and revised when the legislature enacted Public Act 335 of 1996.]

MCL 390.1241 et al

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.