
Senate Fiscal Agency
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

Telephone: (517) 373-5383
Fax: (517) 373-1986
TDD: (517) 373-0543

Senate Bill 497 (Substitute S-1 as reported)

Sponsor: Senator Walter H. North

Committee: Appropriations

CONTENT

The bill would create the "Corrections Officer's Survivor Tuition Act" to provide tuition at State institutions of higher education for the surviving spouses and children of State and local correctional officers killed in the line of duty. Under the bill, a State or local correctional officer's death, from the direct result of a traumatic injury incurred in the line of duty, but not resulting from stress, strain, or occupational disease, would qualify a surviving spouse or child for tuition benefits.

Beginning in the 1998-1999 academic year, the Department of Corrections would pay for tuition at a State institution of higher education for a surviving spouse and for each child of a State or local correctional officer if all of the following conditions were met:

- The spouse or child was admitted to a program of study leading to a degree or certificate.
- The spouse or child was a legal resident of the State at least 12 months prior to application.
- The spouse or child provided evidence to the Department of Corrections that he or she met tuition program requirements.
- The school's financial aid officer certified that the spouse or child needed a tuition waiver to meet educational expenses.
- The spouse or child maintained satisfactory academic progress.
- The spouse or child had not achieved a bachelor's degree.
- If a child survivor, application for the tuition program was made prior to age 21.

The Department of Corrections would be responsible for approving tuition waiver applications and notifying the State institutions of higher learning when an application was approved. The Department of Corrections would be required to reimburse each institution for the total amount of tuition waived during the immediately preceding fiscal year.

The bill would require the Legislature to appropriate the funds necessary to implement the bill.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill could result in added, but minimal, GF/GP costs to the Department of Corrections. There were two State correctional officers killed in the line of duty in 1987, and none has been killed since that time. The correctional officers left one spouse and one child each. Under the bill, each spouse and each child would be eligible for a tuition waiver, assuming the children have not reached age 21. Statewide information about local correctional officers killed in the line of duty is not available. In Wayne County, only one correctional officer has been killed in the line of duty, and that occurred in 1984. Based on a similar fund for State Police, the cost of tuition for four survivors, all attending an institution of higher learning in the same year, is estimated at \$7,000.

Date Completed: 11-10-97

Fiscal Analyst: K. Firestone

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