TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The Committee on General and Housing to which was referred Senate Bill No. 89 entitled "An act relating to expanding survivor benefits" respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 3171 is amended to read:

§ 3171. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(3) "Emergency personnel" means:

(A) firefighters as defined in subdivision 3151(3) of this title; ~~and~~

(B) emergency medical personnel and volunteer personnel as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 2651;

(C) law enforcement officers who have been certified by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council pursuant to section 2358 of this title;

(D) facility employees of the Department of Corrections and Department of Corrections employees who provide direct security and treatment services to offenders under supervision in the community;

(E) classified family services employees in the Family Services Division of the Department for Children and Families; and

(F) classified medical employees of State-operated therapeutic community residences or inpatient psychiatric hospital units.

(4) "Line of duty" means:

(A) ~~answering or returning from~~ with respect to firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and volunteer personnel:

(i) service in answer to a call of the department or service for a fire or emergency ~~or~~, including going to and returning from a fire or emergency or participating in a fire or emergency training drill; or

~~(B)~~(ii) similar service in another town or district to which the department or service has been called for firefighting or emergency purposes;

(B) with respect to law enforcement officers:

(i) service as a law enforcement officer in answer to a complaint lodged with the department or in response to a disorder, including going to, returning from, and investigating or responding to the complaint or disorder; or

(ii) service under orders from the department or in any emergency for which the law enforcement officer serves as a law enforcement officer;

(C) with respect to covered employees of the Department of Corrections, discharging their duties as employees;

(D) with respect to classified family services employees in the Family Services Division of the Department for Children and Families, discharging their duties as employees; and

(E) with respect to classified medical employees of State-operated therapeutic community residences or inpatient psychiatric hospital units, discharging their duties as employees.

* * *

Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 3172 is amended to read:

§ 3172. EMERGENCY PERSONNEL SURVIVORS BENEFIT REVIEW BOARD

(a)(1) There is created the Emergency Personnel Survivors Benefit Review Board, which shall consist of the State Treasurer or designee, the Attorney General or designee, the Chief Fire Service Training Officer of the Vermont Fire Service Training Council or designee, and one member of the public to represent the interests of emergency personnel appointed by the Governor for a term of two years.

(2) Survivors of emergency personnel, employed by or who volunteer for the State of Vermont, a county or municipality of the State, or a nonprofit entity that provides services in the State, who die in the line of duty or of an occupation-related illness may request the Board award a monetary benefit under section 3173 of this ~~title~~ chapter, except survivors of emergency

personnel as defined in subdivisions 3171(3)(C)–(F) of this chapter may request the monetary benefit only for deaths that occur on or after July 1, 2026.

(3) The Board shall be responsible for determining whether to award monetary benefits under section 3173 of this chapter. To assist the Board with applications involving deaths from occupation-related illness, the Board may pay reasonable fees from the Emergency Personnel Survivors Benefit Special Fund for a medical expert and other services as necessary to review applications and make recommendations to the Board.

(4) A decision to award monetary benefits shall be made by unanimous vote of the Board and shall be made within 60 days after the receipt of all information necessary to enable the Board to determine eligibility.

(5) The Board may request any information necessary for the exercise of its duties under this section. Nothing in this section shall prevent the Board from initiating the investigation or determination of a claim before being requested by a survivor or employer of emergency personnel.

* * *

Sec. 3. 20 V.S.A. § 3175 is amended to read:

§ 3175. EMERGENCY PERSONNEL SURVIVORS BENEFIT SPECIAL FUND

(a) The Emergency Personnel Survivors Benefit Special Fund is established in the Office of the State Treasurer for the purpose of the payment

of claims distributed pursuant to this chapter. The Fund shall comprise ~~appropriations~~ transfers made by the General Assembly, amounts transferred by the Emergency Board when the General Assembly is not in session, and contributions or donations from any other source. Expenses incurred pursuant to subdivision 3172(a)(3) of this chapter shall be paid from the Fund. All balances in the Fund at the end of the fiscal year shall be carried forward. Interest earned shall remain in the Fund.

(b) In the event that the balance of the Fund is insufficient to pay monetary benefits awarded by the Board when the General Assembly is not in session, the Emergency Board may, pursuant to its authority under 32 V.S.A. § 133, transfer into the Fund additional amounts necessary to pay the monetary benefits.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

(Committee vote: _____)

_____

Representative _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE