



Kansas State Firefighters Association, Inc.

Dedicated to the Safety and Education of the Kansas Fire Service

Oral Testimony in Support of HB2284

Senate Committee on Financial Institutions & Insurance

March 9, 2023

Good morning Chairman Longbine, and members of the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions & Insurance. My name is Steve Hirsch and I serve as the President of the Kansas State Firefighters Association. Our association represents approximately 16,000 firefighters in Kansas, in both career and volunteer capacities.

I appear today in favor of HB2284, which would provide a technical clean up to COBRA statute, to ensure that all firefighters in the State are eligible to draw on their rightful COBRA coverage.

In a regular review of Statute impacting to firefighter operations, it was discovered that Fire Districts were erroneously left out of the applicable COBRA Statutes.

COBRA is a federal law, which protects the families of those in public service who have given the ultimate sacrifice. COBRA guarantees that the employer of a public safety officer who dies in the line of duty must make the same type of health insurance available to the spouse and dependent children as was provided prior to the death.

COBRA language is provided in Kansas Statute (KSA 40-1709), providing continuation of coverage be required for municipalities, which are defined to include city, county, or township. The Bill would simply add Fire Districts to this list. Fire Districts are specially created local entities which operate independently and serve as the employer to firefighters in their system.

This fix may seem minor and technical, but if the unthinkable were to happen to a firefighter in our state, we want to ensure that their family has no issue getting the services rightfully due.

I ask the Committee to advance HB2284 favorably.

Steve Hirsch

President, Kansas State Firefighters Association