



**Office of
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

For Immediate Release

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Representative Kane supports increase in first responder survivor benefits

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) joined with her House colleagues this week to support an increase in survivor benefits for the families of police, firefighters and other public safety officials killed in the line of duty.

The state currently provides a one-time, tax-free \$150,000 payment to the families of first responders killed in the line of duty, but that would double to \$300,000 under a proposal included in a \$144.4 million Fiscal Year 2017 supplemental budget approved by the House and Senate on March 22. The vote came just five days after firefighter Joseph Toscano, a husband and father of five, collapsed and died while fighting a house fire in Watertown.

“Our police, firefighters and EMTs are constantly placing themselves in harm’s way to serve and protect the public,” said Representative Kane. “Whenever a first responder is killed while doing their job, it’s important that we recognize their sacrifice by doing everything we can to help provide financial support to their families.”

In addition to increasing survivor benefits, the supplemental budget includes a \$300,000 reserve to help pay for the costs associated with regulating the possession and sale of marijuana. Massachusetts voters approved a ballot measure legalizing recreational marijuana in November 2016. As Ranking Minority Member on the newly-formed Committee on Marijuana Policy, Representative Kane is now working alongside her fellow committee members to oversee the implementation of this new law. On April 10th, Representative Kane will be hosting the Joint Committee at Shrewsbury High School, 64 Holden Street in Shrewsbury, from 4-7 p.m. for a public hearing on the subject. Members of the public are invited to testify in person or submit testimony to the Committee on what, if any, changes they believe should be made to the new law.

The supplemental budget also contains funding for a variety of programs, including:

- \$5.8 million for the Department of Public Health, including \$495,000 for the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services;
- \$5.2 million for the Department of Children and Families;
- \$4.5 million for elder home care services;
- \$28 million for the state’s sheriffs’ departments;
- \$20.9 million for emergency housing assistance and family shelters;
- \$10.8 million for the Department of Developmental Services’ Turning 22 program;
- \$31 million for legal assistance provided through the Committee for Public Counsel Services;
- \$14 million for Department of Correction facilities; and
- \$12.4 million to fund collective bargaining agreements

The supplemental budget is now on Governor Charlie Baker's desk for his review and signature.

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