



DOAA

Georgia Department
of Audits & Accounts

Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor

January 18, 2022

Honorable Kim Jackson
State Senator
321-B Coverdell Legislative Office Bldg.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note
Senate Bill (LC 39 3109)

Dear Senator Jackson:

This bill would allow payments from the State Indemnification Fund in the case of suicide or injury resulting from an attempted suicide by a public safety officer if the event occurred within six months of the officer's service. Current law allows for a payment of \$150,000 in the event of death, \$75,000 for a total permanent disability, and \$35,000 for a partial permanent disability. Public safety officers are defined as a law enforcement officer, firefighter, emergency medical technician, emergency management rescue specialist, state highway employee, or prison guard (i.e., correctional officer).

The Department of Administrative Services, which administers the State Indemnification Fund, indicated that additional funding would be required to cover the costs of payouts associated with the bill. The available data provides an incomplete picture of the costs. Data on suicides is self-reported, and it is not known if the data includes only those still on the job or within six months of serving. We also were unable to identify the number of attempted suicides by public safety officers during service or within six months of service.

Blue H.E.L.P., an organization that compiles a list of first responders lost to suicide, documented five suicides among Georgia law enforcement and correctional officers in 2021. The organization also tracks suicides among firefighters and emergency medical service workers, though none were recorded in 2021. Given the \$150,000 payment for deaths, additional costs for 2021 would have been at least \$750,000. The year 2021 did not appear to be an outlier—five suicides were recorded by Blue H.E.L.P. in 2019, and 4 in 2020.

Respectfully,

Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor

Kelly Farr, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

GSG/KF/mt