

Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability

CS/HB 621 — Death Benefits for Active Duty Servicemembers

by State Affairs Committee and Reps. Barnaby, Maney, and others (CS/SB 1094 by Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee and Senator Martin)

The bill increases the death benefit paid by the state for a member of the U.S. Armed Forces who is killed while not engaged in official duties. The death benefit is increased from \$25,000 to \$75,000 (identical to the members on active duty and killed while engaged in official duties). The bill maintains the current law exclusion that a servicemember is not eligible for the benefit in event of suicide or otherwise intentionally self-inflicted injury.

The bill provides that a servicemember may designate a beneficiary in a process set out by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA). The bill requires that proof of residency or duty post of the deceased servicemember at the time of the member's death must be provided to the DMA, in a manner prescribed by the department, in order to qualify for benefits.

The bill clarifies the payment process for the benefit by requiring the DMA to request that the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) draw warrants from the General Revenue Fund for the payment of benefits. The bill grants the DMA and the Department of Financial Services rulemaking authority to adopt rules and procedures appropriate and necessary to implement the regulation and distribution of death benefits of active duty servicemembers.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2023.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 108-0