

J.D. Bloomar Testimony to Senate Standing Committee on Financial Institutions and Insurance

March 21, 2013

Chairman Olson, Senators, Director Sutton, colleagues and friends:

Today, I offer my testimony in support of SB152, *Health Insurance for Firefighters and Law Enforcement Officers* (LEO's). I do support the bill and my fellow Firefighters and Law Enforcement Officers. If not today, then perhaps in another session we can include Emergency Medical Service (EMS) professionals.

Through the sharing of my personal experiences, I hope to demonstrate and convince you to support my position.

Although I am not currently affiliated with any agency or institution, I have previously worked in EMS and Emergency Nursing for over 25 years as an EMT, Paramedic, Educator, and Registered Nurse. My final EMS position was instructing EMT's at Washburn University. I come before you today as a citizen, and constituent of Senator Schmidt's district.

When needed, citizens call for help from all three groups: Fire, LEO, and EMS

When called, professionals respond from all three groups: Fire, LEO, and EMS.

We face the same dangers together, working side by side, to serve the communities to which we belong.

When a line of duty (LOD) death occurs, all three groups and the community feel grief and loss together.

- In 2000: I experienced this with the LOD deaths of Topeka Police Officers Joey Bohlander and Pilot Officer Jeff William Howey. They were tragically killed in a helicopter crash June 13, 2000. Joey was a great guy, with a family. I worked with him as a paramedic here in Topeka Medevac in the late 80's.
- In 2005: I experienced this with the death of Topeka AMR Paramedic Ryan Ostendorf who was killed in a traffic accident by a drunk driver on his way to work on December 5, 2005.
- In 2008: I have experienced this with the LOD death of Topeka Fire Department Captain Tony Cox, who was also a high school classmate of mine, August 13, 2008.
- In 2012: And unfortunately, I recently experienced this again with the LOD deaths of Topeka Police Department Corporal David Gogian and Officer Jeff Atherly December 16, 2012.

When and if a LOD death occurs, spouses and families can be devastated. We do attempt to take care of own, but government recognition and appreciation helps ease the loss. SB152 is a start. Political realities exist, but surely we can work together.

At Captain Tony Cox's funeral, his sister asked "Why did Tony risk his life for you, and you, and you?" "He didn't know your name, had never been a guest in your home, didn't know if you were a good Christian or a sinner, didn't know if you deserved to be saved or would even be grateful for his help."

She answered for Tony, "Because he believed you were worth the risk," "He believed that the human life, friend or stranger, was worth risking his own life." I submit that EMS professionals would respond to the question with exactly the same answer. Surely government can find a way to help those left behind, the spouses and the children, of those we have lost. SB152 in its current form is a start.

In closing, I would like to share one last personal experience. While employed by Sedgwick County EMS in 1990, I sensed the crowds of on-lookers as they grew closer to my partner and I as we treated the victim of a gang related shooting. I felt a tap from behind on my shoulder, and then heard the words "I put those holes in him for a reason." A scary experience, one I hope no other EMS professional will ever have to face. Fire, LEO, and EMS professionals, we all face the same dangers together, side by side. We were all on scene that day.

Rarely are legislators given the opportunity to do so much good with little expense.

Please, support this bill, get it passed, and send it to Governor Brownback for his signature.

Thank you for your attention and I will be glad to respond to any questions.



J.D. Bloomar, RN/Paramedic
2116 SW Meadow LN
Topeka, KS 66614-1442
785-235-2755
ldbloomar@hotmail.com

References:

<http://www.ryanostendorf.com/>

http://www.ksffa.com/Kansas%20Fallen%20Firefighters/cox_anthony_tony.htm

<http://www.topeka.org/tpd/fallenofficers.shtml>