

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, April 29, 2020

Contact | Senator Hertel, (517) 373-1734, senchertel@senate.michigan.gov

Sen. Hertel Introduces COVID-19 Workers Comp Legislation for First Responders

Bill would codify emergency rules presuming workplace exposure to COVID-19

LANSING – State Senator **Curtis Hertel, Jr.** (D-East Lansing) introduced legislation today to expand workers compensation benefits for first responders who contract COVID-19.

Senate Bill 906 would shift the burden of proof for eligibility by creating a presumption of workplace exposure, ensuring workers most at risk have access to workers compensation as a result of COVID-19.

"Our first responders are on the frontline of this pandemic every day, serving our state and protecting Michiganders," said Sen. Hertel. "The last thing they should have to worry about is how they can pay their bills or whether they have enough sick leave if they contract COVID-19 on the job."

In response to COVID-19, Governor Whitmer and the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity issued emergency rules expanding workers compensation for first responders. Senate Bill 906 would codify these emergency rules in statute, ensuring the expanded coverage continue for first responders after the state of emergency is lifted.

"The emergency workers compensation rules issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are a step in the right direction, but remain incomplete," said Ken Grabowski, Legislative Director for the Police Officers Association of Michigan. "We know first responders' risk of contracting the virus will likely continue for longer than the state of emergency. Senate Bill 906 ensures first responders have the protections they need as we continue to fight COVID-19 on the front line."

Under Senate Bill 906, eligible first responders would be law enforcement, fire fighters, state and local correctional officers, physicians, respiratory therapists, licensed or registered nurses, and emergency medical personnel.

"On behalf of the 5,000 professional fire fighters in Michigan, we would like to thank Senator Hertel for his leadership in introducing legislation that protects first responders if they develop COVID-19 in the line of duty," said Mark Docherty, President of Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union. "Our fire fighters and law enforcement officers are on the front lines every day, this protection under the workers compensation act will ensure they can continue protecting our communities."

###