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**From:**  
**Sent:**  
**To:**  
**Subject:**

Wednesday, February 01, 2017 10:37 AM  
House Finance Legislation  
House Bill 23

I'm writing in regards to House Bill 23 giving law enforcement and fire fighter family's medical benefits if their spouse is killed in the line of duty. For several years now, this has been going round and round with nothing being done. This bill continues to get pushed aside to be dealt with "next session" And every year, these families that have been affected, have to come down to relive their pain and retell their story. Can you imagine what that does for them? It makes it hard for them to move on from the death of their husbands. Every day you expect these men, one of which is my husband, to put on that uniform and risk their life to keep you safe. Especially now when every day there is another law enforcement officer being shot and killed in the line of duty. Officers are getting ambushed. Recently a Louisiana Police officer was killed while trying to assist someone he thought had been in an accident. Only to find out he placed himself in the middle of a domestic violence situation. In the State of Alaska, we have a high percentage of domestic violence calls. And many times, due to the uniqueness of our state, the Troopers respond by themselves. No back up. Sometimes the nearest backup is hours away.

Currently, Alaska State Troopers are being paid under market value. Since January of 2016, DPS has lost approximately 35 troopers to work for different agencies that pay better. In case you aren't aware, DPS was already down boots on the ground. This is sad in a time when the FBI has Alaska as one of the top unsafe states in the US. There is a huge drug epidemic in our state as well. The financial burden of this bill is so small in the grand scheme of things. There are many other ways the State of Alaska can save money that doesn't affect families who give the ultimate sacrifice.

Please, take the time to pass this bill. Law enforcement has a thankless job. Give these amazing men and women one small peace of mind knowing that if the unthinkable happens, their family is taken care of. Would you rest easier at night if you knew your family was taken care of? Or would you want them to go through what Brandy Johnson and Nikki Toll have had to go through for the past several years fighting for this benefit. Having to leave their children to come down, retelling their story. I'm going to take a guess that you would never want your family to endure that pain. Please do the right thing and pass this bill.

Teri

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**From:** Caroline Mau  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2017 10:12 AM  
**To:** House Finance Legislation  
**Subject:** House Bill 23

It is my understanding that House Bill 23 is to be discussed at an upcoming meeting on Feb. 1. I would like to show my support for this bill with regard to survivors' benefits to first responders lost in the line of duty.

I know that there is no testimony that I could give that would be more impactful than testimony given by Brandy Johnson over the past (nearly) 3 years. However, May 1, 2014 is a day that will stand out in my mind for the rest of my life. It is the day that the Alaska State Trooper family lost Gabe Rich and Scott Johnson. It is the day that I stood and watched as Angie Rich was told that Gabe would not be coming home. It is the day I stood and watched as a woman's life unraveled before my eyes. I am moved to tears every time that I think of this day. It's a tragedy that I pray that nobody else has to live through.

In the first responder field, it is not only those out on the front line that sacrifice. As the wife of an Alaska State Trooper, I, like my fellow Trooper spouses, have experienced my share of panic wondering if my husband would come home at night. I too have sacrificed having my husband with me for birthday parties, family events, holidays, etc. Having continuing healthcare insurance is a burden that we, the spouses, should not have to bare in the event of a tragedy. I hope that our legislators, representatives, senators as well as the general public understand how important House Bill 23 is and strongly suggest that all support this bill. I hope that this bill is never needed. However, passing this bill as a safeguard for those that make such huge sacrifices is a small token of gratitude and would give greater piece of mind than you could imagine. Thank you for your consideration.

Caroline Mau

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**From:**  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2017 11:05 PM  
**To:** House Finance Legislation  
**Subject:** HB 23/ Feb 1, 2017

Hello,

I am writing to advocate for survivors of our LEOs to receive health benefits. As an AST wife with 2 young children, I have witnessed first hand the struggles other families have had to go through after losing their loved one. I cannot imagine also having to worry about health insurance for my kids while grieving.

I am an LCSW and counselor for soldiers on Fort Wainwright. The military provides this support and takes care of survivor families. I am completely shocked that Alaska has not and is not honoring our fallen troopers in this way! They deal with enough stress on a daily basis and to add worrying if their families will be taken care of after they die is absurd!

My husband and all our public safety officers risk their lives daily to protect our community. Especially with the anti-police culture right now; I worry daily if my husband will make it home safe. You have the power to do the right thing. Please make it right this time. I can be reached at 907-750-5212.

Sincerely,  
Carol Altepeter

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S@6 active, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone

Re: CS for HB 23, Insurance for Dependents of Line of Duty Death State Troopers/Police/Firefighters

Chairmen and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Brandy Johnson. I am testifying in support of HB 23 on behalf of myself, my three daughters, my deceased husband, Scott Johnson, surviving families of past and future line of duty death state troopers as well as law enforcement officers in the state of Alaska.

On May 1st, 2014, my husband, Scott Johnson and Gabe Rich were murdered while in the performance of their job in Tanana, Alaska.

Scott's job was that of a Sgt. with the Alaska State Troopers. He had worked as a state trooper for over 21 years with a total of over 23 years vested in the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). He could have retired with 20 years of service. However, Scott and I decided he should work another 5 years to gain the medical benefits for our family at the 25 year mark as a Tier II employee. It was while trying to obtain this promised benefit goal that Scott was ambushed and killed. Scott would have retired this past October with major medical benefits for himself and our family.

I had asked the state troopers assisting me after Scott was killed if I had health insurance. I initially was told I was set for life by one Lieutenant. However, that was not the case. I was later told that my family's benefits would expire at the end of the month. I was disappointed and angry. My choices were to pay \$1,150 per month for the retirement major medical health care that we would have received in a year and a half at no cost as a retirement benefit or \$1,700 for full coverage COBRA.

What is frustrating, is that the person who shot my husband to death and his father who desecrated my husband's dead body, while incarcerated, have medical care available at no cost to them as their families also has free health care.

I felt Scott's last three years of service were all for nothing.

Scott always took his responsibilities very seriously to protect the people of Alaska. I had believed upon his death, the State would also take responsibility to now take care of his family. Graciously, the State of Alaska has these past two and a half years until the gap in law could be resolved.

Our family has paid the price for this benefit. We have paid into the PERS retirement system, we have paid with the endless callouts. Whether it be a K9, SERT, homicide calls or one of the many other emergency responses Scott was involved with. This is called, to give of yourself for the sake of others.

I am here today asking for your support of HB 23. This bill is more than what I have advocated the legislature for as a health benefit. This bill provides full coverage health insurance that takes care of young surviving families that need well child check ups. The retirement health care plan was not a long term solution. It was a "band-aide" so to say and a safety net in case of a major medical emergency. It did not take care of the family.

This legislation will ensure that another surviving spouse does not have to experience what I

have. They will have the assurance that their children will be taken care of if there was a health emergency.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Brandy Johnson

Dear Esteemed Committee Members,

I would like to express my support for HB 23 today. I believe that this bill would be beneficial to all of Alaska as it would encourage more brave men and women to serve our communities via law enforcement and fire fighting.

I myself am not directly related to any law enforcement officers or fire fighters, but I do know many and their families. While I do believe that our communities would rally around and support a family that was left without their provider due to a death in the line of duty, I do not believe it is their responsibility. That responsibility, in my opinion, lies with the State.

I do understand the budget constraints our great State is facing. While the budget cuts have been effective and I look forward to seeing more, in this case, the monies used to fund HB 23 would be well spent, and well deserved.

I am a former City Council member for the City of Delta Junction and sat on the Board of Directors for the Alaska Municipal League. I understand the hard decisions you, as legislators, have to make on a daily basis. I hope that you weigh all the factors regarding HB 23 evenly and make the best decision for Alaska's public safety and its future.

Thank you for your time and your public service.

Sincerely,

SEBASTIAN SAARLOOS  
DELTA JUNCTION

Good Morning

I am writing to express my support for HB 23 providing full coverage for families of surviving members of Alaska State Troopers/Firefighters killed in line on duty.

I am a life long Alaskan born in Ketchikan and retired with 26 years of State Service while stationed in Barrow.

I would like to urge the legislators to honor those who lost their lives in service to the citizens of the State of Alaska. It is important to take care of the families of those who take care of us. These are good people who lost loved ones who need all of our support in this matter.

Sincerely

Cheryl L Gilmour  
Fairbanks , AK

To Whom it May Concern,

I am unable to attend the teleconference Wednesday due to a prior commitment coaching youth hockey. I want to submit public comment on HB23 however.

I am a strong supporter of extending health benefits to fallen State Troopers/officers and firefighters, that have died during the line of duty. This is a very simple issue and it affects very few families, having a minimal impact on our overall state budget.

When an officer/firefighter is killed in the line of duty, his/her position is left vacant for a certain amount of time. The savings during this vacancy should partly off-set the cost of the continued health coverage at least at the beginning.

I strongly support extending health benefits to these families at least through the expected retirement date of the fallen officer/firefighter.

This law should be put into effect immediately and apply to families who have lost an officer/firefighter within the last 5 years.

Thank-you for the opportunity to comment.

Rebecca Schwanke  
Glennallen, AK



For heaven's sake, pass this bill for survivors of fallen officers to have health insurance. This had dragged on way too long.  
Thanks.

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Nancy Tarnai  
Fairbanks, Alaska

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