

2026 -- H 7186

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- NOTIFICATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS, POLICE OFFICERS AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS AFTER EXPOSURE TO INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Introduced By: Representatives Edwards, Bennett, Casey, Alzate, Casimiro, Potter, Kennedy, Carson, and Fogarty

Date Introduced: January 21, 2026

Referred To: House Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 23-28.36-1, 23-28.36-2 and 23-28.36-4 of the General Laws in
2 Chapter 23-28.36 entitled "Notification of Fire Fighters, Police Officers and Emergency Medical
3 Technicians After Exposure to Infectious Diseases" are hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **23-28.36-1. Legislative findings.**

5 The general assembly finds and declares that by reason of their employment, fire fighters,
6 police officers, and emergency medical technicians are required to work in the midst of, and are
7 subject to, exposure to infectious diseases, including, but not limited to, human immunodeficiency
8 virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus (HBV), and hepatitis C virus (HCV) , and coronavirus disease 2019
9 (COVID-19); that after exposure, fire fighters, police officers, and emergency medical technicians
10 are not informed of the exposures; that fire fighters, police officers, and emergency medical
11 technicians so exposed can potentially and unwittingly expose coworkers, families, and members
12 of the public to infectious diseases. The general assembly further finds and declares that all the
13 aforementioned conditions exist and arise out of or in the course of employment.

14 **23-28.36-2. Definitions.**

15 The following terms when used in this chapter shall have the following meanings herein
16 ascribed:

17 (1) "Contagious disease" means an infectious disease.

18 (2) "Disability" means a condition of physical incapacity to perform any assigned duty or

1 duties in the fire department or emergency medical service.

2 (3) "Emergency medical technician" means a person licensed pursuant to chapter 4.1 of
3 this title to provide emergency medical services.

4 (4) "Fire department" means service groups (paid or volunteer) that are organized and
5 trained for the prevention and control of loss of life and property from fire or other emergency.

6 (5) "Fire fighter" means an individual who is assigned to fire fighting activity and is
7 required to respond to alarms and perform emergency action at the location of a fire, hazardous
8 materials, or other emergency incident.

9 (6) "Infectious disease" means interruption, cessation, or disorder of body functions,
10 systems, or organs transmissible by association with the sick or their secretions or excretions,
11 excluding the common cold. Infectious disease includes, but is not limited to, human
12 immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus (HBV), ~~and~~ hepatitis C virus (HCV)), and
13 coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

14 (7) "Licensed facility" means a hospital, nursing home, dialysis center, physician's office
15 operatory, or the like, as may be licensed by the state to provide medical care.

16 (8) "Police officer" means any permanently employed city or town police officer, state
17 police officer, committing squad member, or other permanent law enforcement officer as defined
18 in § 12-7-21; provided, however, this shall not include the highest ranking officer of any of the
19 departments.

20 (9) "Strike force member" means any member of the statewide strike force of the
21 department of attorney general.

22 **23-28.36-4. Occupational disability for fire fighters Occupational disability of fire**
23 **fighters, police officers and emergency medical technicians.**

24 Any active fire fighter ~~or~~ police officer or emergency medical technician who is unable to
25 perform his or her duties in his or her department by reason of exposure to infectious disease as
26 defined in § 23-28.36-2, which infectious disease develops or manifests itself as a result of the
27 exposure during a period while the fire fighter ~~or~~ police officer or emergency medical technician
28 is in the service of the department, shall be entitled to receive an occupational disability, and he or
29 she shall be entitled to all of the benefits provided for in ~~chapter 19 of title 45 chapters 19, 21 and~~
30 21.2 of title 45, as applicable, and chapter 10 of title 36, as applicable if the fire fighter, police
31 officer or emergency medical technician is employed by the state.

32 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- NOTIFICATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS, POLICE
OFFICERS AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS AFTER EXPOSURE TO
INFECTIOUS DISEASES

- 1 This act amends the definition of infectious diseases to include the coronavirus disease
- 2 2019 (COVID-19) and would include emergency medical technicians eligible for benefits.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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