

Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER House, No. 5431

TITLE An Act relative to firefighter staffing

SPONSORS Representative Fiola of Fall River

PRIOR HISTORY

Not applicable

CURRENT LAW

Chapter 22D (DEPARTMENT OF FIRE SERVICES)

Chapter 29 (STATE FINANCE)

SUMMARY

SECTION 1: Amends Chapter 22D (DEPARTMENT OF FIRE SERVICES) by adding section 7(a) to create the Firefighter Staffing Coordinating Council within the Department of Fire Services. The council is created to provide municipal firefighter staffing recommendations and administer the newly created Firefighter Staffing Grant Fund. The council will consist of 7 members, including:

The Secretary of Public Safety and Security (or designee)

The State Fire Marshal (or designee)

2 members from the Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts

2 members from the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts

1 representative from the insurance industry

Have members appointed by the governor for 3-year terms without compensation.

Additionally, the council is responsible for conducting a statewide firefighter staffing survey every 4 years, promulgating regulations for implementation of the grant fund, and creating and managing an application process for grants, including deadlines and submission requirements.

SECTION 2: Amends Chapter 29 (STATE FINANCE) by inserting after Section 2NNNNNN, Section 2000000. Creates the Firefighter Staffing Grant Fund as a separate state fund under Chapter 29 of the General Laws.

Provides that the fund shall be administered by the Firefighter Staffing Coordinating Council. Money in the fund may be used to provide grants to municipalities for: Hiring firefighters, maintaining firefighter staffing levels, or increasing staffing levels. The fund may receive: Legislative appropriations, federal grants, gifts, donations, and other contributions. Any unspent money in the fund would remain available and not revert to the General Fund at the end of the fiscal year. The council may prioritize grant awards based on factors such as the following: Municipal financial need, staffing shortages, public safety concerns, call volume, or service demands. Compliance with staffing recommendations established by the council.

The section also authorizes the council to establish application criteria, reporting requirements, and oversight procedures for municipalities receiving grant funds