Pennsylvania Municipal League
President – J. William Reynolds, Mayor, City of Bethlehem

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners
President – Todd Miller, Commissioner, Cresent Township

MEMO

To: House Local Government Committee

From: Amy Sturges, Deputy Executive Director for Advocacy, The League and PSATC

Re: Opposition to House Bill 911 (PN 961)

Date: June 16, 2026

On behalf of the members of The League and PSATC, I am writing to express our ***strong opposition*** to House Bill 911 which is on the Committee's agenda for tomorrow. The legislation places an unfunded and unaffordable mandate on local taxpayers by requiring health care be provided to the surviving spouse and dependents of police officers killed in service.

While the concept of supporting families of officers killed in service is laudable, the resulting cost of this expansive health insurance benefit will fall squarely on local taxpayers. The current Killed in Service Benefit is paid to families by the Commonwealth. We believe this health care benefit should also be paid by the Commonwealth where the fiscal impact is better absorbed.

The bill is a significant unfunded mandate requiring that health insurance be provided to the surviving spouse until age 65 and to surviving dependents until age 26. Further, if an officer is disabled while in the performance of their duties, the health insurance benefit extends for both the officer and spouse until the death of the officer. In both of these cases, a health care insurance benefit could conceivably be paid for decades.

Additionally, the benefit is retroactive for surviving spouses widowed before the effective date of the legislation.

Aside from the huge affordability issue this legislation raises, we have the following questions:

- Does the retroactivity allow a spouse and dependents to collect payments from a municipality to repay them for healthcare costs incurred before this legislation was enacted?

- Are health insurance carriers legally able to insure non-employees? Or to put it another way, will municipalities be able to apply for coverage for people not in their employ?
- Future changes to the health insurance carrier may change the coverage, as could changes to future collective bargaining agreements. Are municipalities required to keep the surviving spouse's coverage the same, if the rest of the insureds are under a new policy and/or a new carrier?
- Health care, spousal benefits and disability benefits are collectively bargained items with the pension laws also coming into play. How does this legislation fit with Act 111, Act 600, the Third Class City Code and the other municipal codes?
- The provision regarding health care benefits for the life of disabled officers is very broad. What is to stop an officer receiving disability and health insurance benefits from working full time in another field of work?

In communicating our opposition, committee staff provided amendment language for us to review. While there were some changes that alleviate the length of time this mandate could be in place, some of the amendments raised more questions and concern for us.

For these reasons and because of the many unanswered questions we have, we are strongly opposed to this bill moving out of committee at this time.

Thank you for your consideration.