



SB 823 = MANDATED SPECIAL “MENTAL-STRESS” BENEFITS

MYTH vs. FACT

MYTH: SB 823 would be specific to certain employees and only pertain to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

- **FACT:** No. **SB 823 would greatly expand workers’ compensation benefits to all public and private employees under certain circumstances. SB 823 would broadly pertain to “mental or emotional impairment[s]”.**

MYTH: SB 823 would only mandate special benefits to those subjected to, or forced to use, “deadly force”.

- **FACT:** No. There is no threshold of “use of deadly force” in SB 823. In fact, **SB 823 uses a vague standard of “witnessing”** an incident as the threshold to receive such special benefits.

MYTH: In order to receive such proposed mandated benefits, SB 823 would require a diagnosis by a licensed Psychologist and/or Psychiatrist.

- **FACT:** No. **SB 823 would simply require a diagnosis by a “licensed and board certified mental health professional”** such as a therapist or counselor.

MYTH: SB 823 would pertain only to unique, “mass shooting” circumstances.

- **FACT:** No. It **would cover a wide variety of incidents that municipal first responders and others, witness** – from traffic accidents to domestic disputes to crime scenes to workplace violence – as it would ambiguously cover witnessing the “death” or “maiming” of someone else.

MYTH: SB 823 would only mandate benefits for incidents that result from “acts of violence”.

- **FACT:** No. **SB 823 does not specify “acts of violence”** – instead, it merely ties such mandated benefits to “intentional acts”. In fact, there is a proposed amendment that would delete “intentional” and therefore, broaden the mandate to potentially cover all incidents, including accidents.

MYTH: SB 823 would not have a negative impact on municipal budgets, taxpayers and businesses.

- **FACT:** No. In fact, SB 823 would be one of the largest unfunded state mandates on towns and cities in recent history. It would severely impact the private sector as well. **The cost of an individual “mental-mental” case** for either partial disability or a permanent total claim could **range from several hundreds of thousands – to over one million dollars for the duration of the claim**, depending on the circumstances. SB 823 would completely overturn the foundation of Connecticut’s workers’ compensation system by mandating such highly subjective benefits – and would **expose municipalities to even more fraud**, and drain already limited local resources (i.e. administrative, forensic medical/legal, financial, etc.).

MYTH: Town and city officials have no other recourse but SB 823.

- **FACT:** No. **Towns and cities already offer health insurance, disability leaves, and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to employees suffering from mental or emotional impairments.** These existing benefits provide that police officers and other employees receive counseling, therapy, and other essential services to assist them and their families during difficult periods.

THE BOTTOM-LINE:

Good intentions can have unintended consequences – as would be the case with SB 823. The dedication and service of our employees, particularly our first responders, is not at issue. What is at question is whether local property taxpayers – and their hometown budgets – should be mandated by the State to provide special mental benefits from "witnessing" a crime scene – all without any financial assistance from the State.

Local officials have grave concerns over the precedent this new, unfunded state mandate would impose – the subjectivity of the instances that would trigger such benefits, and the cost implications on already struggling local budgets.

As the Appropriations & Finance Committees’ budget would cut municipal aid by \$150 million – and the MORE Commission examines ways to reduce or eliminate unfunded state mandates – now is not the time to impose new, costly state mandates on hometowns. *It is time for mandates relief!*

CCM respectfully urges lawmakers to take no action on SB 823.

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