

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
88R768 SCL-F

H.B. 3849  
By: Bell, Cecil et al. (Creighton)  
Local Government  
5/19/2023  
Engrossed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Firefighters and emergency medical services providers who are employed by certain municipalities in Texas are guaranteed the ability to purchase continued health coverage after retirement. While the municipality can charge the retired employee the full cost of the coverage, the option to purchase this coverage is valuable for several reasons. While most first responders tend to retire before the age of 65, they are ineligible for Medicare until that age and finding quality health coverage to fill the gap can be difficult. Also, having the ability to keep the same coverage is often worth the added cost. Prior to the passage of H.B. 2171 in the last regular session, firefighters and emergency medical services providers who retire from an emergency services district were not afforded this guarantee. That bill added such districts in counties of a certain population to the list of entities that must offer continued health coverage to retired firefighters and emergency medical services providers.

H.B. 3849 seeks to extend the opportunity for continued health coverage to another group of first responders, specifically firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical services providers that work in The Woodlands Township north of Houston.

H.B. 3849 amends current law relating to the eligibility of certain retired firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical services providers to purchase continued health benefits coverage.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 175.001, Local Government Code, as follows:

Sec. 175.001. APPLICABILITY. (a) Defines "township."

(b) Creates this subsection from existing text. Provides that Chapter 175 (Right of Employees of Certain Political Subdivisions to Purchase Continued Health Coverage at Retirement) applies to a person who:

(1) retires from certain employment, including employment as a firefighter, police officer, or emergency medical services provider by a township with a population of 110,000 or more; and

(2) is entitled to receive retirement benefits from certain entities, including a township.

Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. (a) Provides that Chapter 175, Local Government Code, as amended by this Act, applies according to its terms to all eligible persons who leave employment with a township on or after January 1, 2024.

(b) Requires a township that is required by Chapter 175, Local Government Code, as amended by this Act, to provide continued health benefits coverage but that is not allowed to provide the coverage under the terms of the township's existing group health plan to ensure that the required continued health benefits coverage is provided for in any new plan that is adopted by the township on or after January 1, 2024, unless the township is exempted under Section 175.007 (Exemptions), Local Government Code.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2023.