

# **Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislation Expanding Access to Health Insurance for Families of Fallen State Workers**

April 29 2022 6:14 PM



CHICAGO – Governor JB Pritzker today signed Senate Bill 3197, a piece of legislation that would expand access to health insurance benefits with no premium costs for the families of state employees who lose their life during employment.

“There is no higher calling than the work to protect our most vulnerable children,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Deidre Silas was a distinguished public servant who devoted her

life to that mission, and we miss her terribly. It is in her honor that we take action to expand health insurance coverage to survivors of tragedy and create a safer environment for those who do the crucial work of protecting our young people.”

“In response to the fatal stabbing of Deidre Silas, we must ensure the families of those who serve our most vulnerable populations are cared for,” said State Senator Doris Turner (D-Springfield). “Ms. Silas died as a dedicated public servant, and this is the least we can do to honor her commitment to our state.”

“In January we mourned the loss of yet another DCFS worker in Illinois,” said State Representative Tony McCombie (R-Savanna). “Pamela Knight and Deidra Silas gave their lives trying to protect small children, and while we cannot get their lives back, we can make sure their family has the means to take care of themselves. That is why I was proud to lead the effort to pass SB3197 through the House. This legislation will ensure that survivors of State employees killed in the line of duty will be eligible for group health insurance regardless of their vested status.”

Senate Bill 3197 provides health insurance coverage to survivors and dependents of state employees who are killed in the line of duty, regardless of how long they had been employed.

It is retroactive for one year to include the family of Deidre Silas, a DCFS Child Welfare Specialist, who was slain while on duty conducting a visit to a home. Her survivors were not eligible for survivor benefits because she had five months of creditable service with DCFS, one month short of the six-months vesting requirement.

Since Gov. Pritzker took office, he has worked to provide resources for children in need and the caseworkers who serve them by leading an aggressive overhaul of the state’s hollowed out social service system. These efforts include increasing DCFS funding by \$340 million, hiring nearly 1,000 additional staff members, and nearly eliminating the backlog of hotline callbacks.

This law is effective immediately.