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To: Aleena Wilson, Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement, Minnesota
From: Angela Rowe, Employment, Labor and Retirement Program, NCSL
Date: September 11, 2026
Subject: Duty Disability Benefits

Thank you for reaching out to NCSL for information regarding information on duty disability benefits under state retirement systems. In this memo, you will find information on the common approaches states use to provide disability coverage for police officers and firefighters that are disabled while on duty, and where available, relevant information on the fiscal predictability or sustainability of this coverage. After reviewing this memo, please don't hesitate to reach out should you need additional information.

NCSL is a nonpartisan organization and does not support or oppose any of the policies or sources identified in this memorandum.

Overview

States use a range of approaches to provide financial and health-care benefits to police officers and firefighters who become disabled in the line of duty. Programs vary across states in the level and duration of disability benefits, coverage during disability leave, access to retiree health insurance and how costs are shared among employees, employers and pension systems.

Recent state activity illustrates several approaches to duty-disability and retiree health benefits. Minnesota is examining its duty-disability and health-insurance policies, while Colorado operates a statewide death and disability system. Washington distinguishes between duty disability and catastrophic disabilities while Ohio provides a health-care stipend, and New Jersey offers qualifying public-safety retirees access to state-administered health coverage.

State Approaches

Minnesota

Minnesota is examining changes to duty-disability benefits and health insurance for disabled police officers and firefighters. The 2026 Legislature established work groups addressing duty-disability reforms and access to affordable health insurance for duty-disabled members and retirees of the Public Employees Retirement Association Police and Fire Plan.

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The work also addresses the funding and administration of the existing duty-disability system and health-insurance benefits.

Key feature: Minnesota is examining disability benefits and health coverage together as part of its current pension policy review.

Colorado

Colorado's Fire & Police Pension Association (FPPA) administers a Statewide Death & Disability Plan covering participating firefighters, police officers and other first responders. The plan provides 24/7 on- and off-duty disability and death coverage and is funded through employer and member contributions.

As of Jan. 1, 2026, FPPA reported a 98.8% funded ratio for the Statewide Death & Disability Plan.

Key feature: Disability risk and funding are pooled across participating employers through a statewide system.

Washington

Washington's Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System (LEOFF) distinguishes between duty disability and catastrophic disability.

Under LEOFF Plan 2, a member who qualifies for duty-disability retirement receives a disability retirement benefit but does not receive continued health insurance through the retirement system. The LEOFF 2 system provides additional health-related benefits for members who qualify as catastrophically disabled, including reimbursement for certain health insurance, COBRA and Medicare-related costs.

Key feature: Health-related benefits differ based on the severity of the disability.

Ohio

The Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund (OP&F) provides eligible service and disability retirees with a **health-care stipend** through a health reimbursement arrangement. The stipend can be used toward qualifying health-care coverage and expenses, including certain COBRA costs.The program also coordinates with Medicare for eligible retirees.

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Key feature: Health-care assistance is provided as a defined stipend rather than through a promise to pay the full cost of a particular retiree health plan.

New Jersey

New Jersey provides qualifying local police officers and firefighters access to the **State Health Benefits Program (SHBP)** under Chapter 330. Eligibility includes certain retirees with at least 25 years of pension service and qualifying disability retirees when the employer does not provide retiree health coverage.

The state establishes specific premium rates and retiree contribution requirements for Chapter 330 coverage.

Key feature: Qualifying public-safety retirees can access a statewide group health program subject to statutory eligibility and premium-sharing requirements.

Comparison of State Approaches

State	Disability/retirement system	Health-care approach	Distinguishing feature
Minnesota	PERA Police and Fire duty-disability system	Current legislative review of health coverage for duty-disabled members and retirees	Active examination of disability and health-care policies
Colorado	Statewide Death & Disability Plan	Disability coverage through statewide system	Employer/member funding and pooled risk
Washington	LEOFF Plan 2	Enhanced health-related benefits for catastrophic disabilities	Distinguishes catastrophic from other duty disabilities
Ohio	OP&F service and disability retirement	Defined health-care stipend/HRA	Fixed health-care benefit
New Jersey	PFRS retirement and disability retirement	Access to SHBP under Chapter 330	Statewide group coverage with eligibility and premium-sharing requirements

Common Policy Features

Across these states, several approaches appear in different combinations:

- **Defined disability benefits:** States establish specific pension formulas and eligibility standards for duty-related disabilities.
- **Time- or eligibility-based health coverage:** Health benefits can be tied to disability status, retirement status or eligibility for Medicare.
- **Defined health-care assistance:** Ohio uses a stipend rather than paying the full cost of a retiree's selected coverage.

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- **Targeted health benefits:** Washington provides additional health-related benefits to members with catastrophic disabilities.
- **Statewide risk pooling:** Colorado administers disability benefits through a statewide system funded by employer and member contributions.
- **Statewide group health coverage:** New Jersey provides qualifying public-safety retirees access to a state-administered health plan.
- **Ongoing policy review:** Minnesota is examining the administration, funding and health-insurance implications of its duty-disability system.

Conclusion

State approaches to duty-disability pensions and health insurance for police officers and firefighters vary in benefit structure, health-care coverage and funding arrangements. The examples reviewed here illustrate several distinct models, including statewide disability systems, defined health-care stipends, differentiated benefits for catastrophic disabilities, continued access to group health coverage and ongoing legislative review of disability and health-care costs.

These approaches reflect different ways states structure benefits and allocate the costs associated with work-related disability, retirement and health insurance.

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