STATE OF NEW YORK

7837

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

December 27, 2023

Introduced by Sen. MANNION -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Rules

AN ACT to amend the volunteer firefighters' benefit law, in relation to establishing a municipal group insurance technical assistance program

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The volunteer firefighters' benefit law is amended by adding a new section 34 to read as follows:

§ 34. Municipal group insurance technical assistance program. 1. There is hereby established by the workers' compensation board a municipal group insurance technical assistance program for the purpose of assisting persons and municipalities with access to indemnity insurance and employee compensation as required by this chapter.

2. Such program shall have the following duties, including, but not limited to:

a. establishing a service delivery structure based in New York state that includes a toll-free telephone hotline, an interactive website and availability of in-person, telephone and email access to program staff or volunteers;

b. identifying, investigating, referring and resolving complaints made by, or on behalf of, a person who is indemnified by an insurance plan for a fire protection district or a fire alarm district, or to a village, town or county, or combination thereof, that is required to provide insurance to such person, as required by this chapter;

c. providing assistance to a village, town or county, or combination thereof, that contracts or is applying to contract for insurance indemnifying a fire protection district or a fire alarm district, including, but not limited to, the financing of any benefits to be paid with serial bonds or capital notes, contracting and purchasing such indemnity insurance, participating in a county plan or municipal group plan, filing

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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with the workers' compensation board and paying financial benefits to a person covered by such indemnity insurance under this chapter;

d. assisting individuals in filing and preparing appeals before the workers' compensation board as may be required by the board or under this chapter;

e. collecting, tracking and quantifying problems and inquiries encountered by individuals and municipalities; and

f. educating individuals or a village, town or county to their rights and responsibilities with respect to indemnity contracts for a fire protection district or a fire alarm district.

3. Notices and materials provided to persons by the workers' compensation board as required by this chapter shall include the name, phone number and website address of the municipal group insurance technical assistance program established pursuant to this section.

4. Funds available for expenditure pursuant to this section for the establishment of a municipal group insurance technical assistance program may be allocated and distributed by the chair of the workers' compensation board, subject to the approval of the director of the budget, but only after the chair of the workers' compensation board holds a request for proposal process for the establishment of a municipal group insurance technical assistance program. Only domestic not-for-profit corporations shall be eligible to submit proposals for such program. Entities and individuals that currently or have represented claimants before the board shall be excluded from consideration. The chair of the workers' compensation board shall consider all competitive proposals submitted through such request for proposal process and shall determine which proposal submitted is appropriate for the establishment of a municipal group insurance technical assistance program. In making such determination, applicants who demonstrate experience providing advocacy or assistance to a fire protection district or a fire alarm district, experience operating a call center, or experience tracking and reporting on case activities while protecting individual confidentiality shall receive deference for the award.

§ 2. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after it shall have become a law.