AN ACT

To enact R.S. 33:2581.3, relative to the classified police service; to provide that the development of hearing loss while employed in the classified police service is an occupational disease; to provide for benefits to an affected employee; to create a rebuttable presumption that such hearing loss developed during employment under certain circumstances; to require certain persons appointed to the classified police service to submit to certain audiology examinations; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 33:2581.3 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

§2581.3. Development of hearing loss during employment in the classified police service; occupational disease

A. Any loss of hearing that is ten decibels or greater on average for the frequencies that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration monitors for noise exposure in the general population when adjusted for aging and that develops during employment in the classified police service in the state of Louisiana shall, for purposes of this Section only, be classified as a disease or infirmity connected with employment. The employee affected shall be entitled to medical benefits, including hearing aids, as granted by the laws of the state of Louisiana to which one suffering an occupational disease is entitled, regardless of whether the employee is on duty at the time he is stricken with the loss of hearing. Such loss of hearing shall be presumed to have developed during employment and shall be presumed to have been caused by or to have resulted from hazardous noise exposure when diagnostic
hearing testing reveals a decrease of ten decibels or more for the frequencies that the
Occupational Safety and Health Administration monitors for noise exposure from the
baseline audiological evaluation. This presumption shall be rebuttable by a
preponderance of evidence, and such presumption can be overcome if the evidence
does not establish that the nature of the work performed was the predominant and
major cause of the hearing loss. Such presumption shall be extended to an employee
following termination of service for a period of twenty-four months.

B. Each person selected for appointment to an entry level position in the
classified police service on and after August 1, 2022, shall submit to a baseline
audiology examination, an audiological examination every five years, and a final
termination audiological evaluation at the end of service. The appointing authority
shall develop and implement policies and procedures for the administration of such
examinations. A person shall receive his baseline examination not later than one year
after his appointment.

C.(1) Nothing in this Section shall modify the qualifications necessary to
establish eligibility to receive benefits or the calculation of benefits to be paid under
any Louisiana public pension or retirement system, plan, or fund.

(2) In case of a conflict between any provision of Title 11 of the Louisiana
Revised Statutes of 1950, including any provision in Subpart E of Part II of Chapter
4 of Subtitle III of Title 11 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, and any
provision of this Section, the provision of Title 11 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes
of 1950 shall control.