



FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE OF OHIO, INC.

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House Insurance Committee

March 22, 2017

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Chair Brinkman and members of the committee,

I am Mike Weinman a retired Columbus police officer who now serves as director of government affairs for the FOP. Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of the 25,000 active and retired FOP members from every corner of Ohio to urge you to support an amendment to HB 27 that would treat post traumatic stress disorder as any other on the job injury.

The FOP strongly urges you to vote in favor of requiring the Bureau of Workers Compensation to cover Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for first responders. Last session, the issue was the subject of SB 5, and in the 130th GA it was the topic of SB 252 which the Senate passed with only one vote against. It is critically important to provide coverage, through BWC, for first responders who experience PTSD. Failing to treat PTSD often leads to death through suicide and increases illegal drug use and alcoholism among first responders. Once identified, PTSD can be treated effectively allowing first responders to continue their careers serving our great state.

The amendment is limited to public employee first responders and to one mental health condition: PTSD. We are sure you have heard arguments that this change in law will open floodgates of claims bankrupting BWC. BWC is more than solvent; they have given billions in rebates over the last several years and are currently proposing further rate cuts for public employers. As to the rush of claims, no one other than an actuary can make an educated guess as to how many claims will be filed. BWC has been unable to produce evidence that this rush will occur and how many there may be. They have suggested that 18% of first responders have PTSD at any one time. This figure does not reflect the number of first responders who will actually file a claim. Looking at the number of disability retirements related to mental health issues from the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund, we find 13 people a year in 2012 and 2013 retired due to the disability. OP & F does not distinguish if the mental health issue was PTSD.

Early retirements are not the goal of the FOP. Getting treatment for PTSD is the goal. As the VA has shown, PTSD is treatable and those who suffer from it can lead productive careers. However ignoring PTSD destroys families and lives. Your support of the amendment to HB 27 will be rewarded in the lives you will save and the families that will be preserved.