



Ohio Association of Professional Fire Fighters

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Good morning Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance committee. My name is William Quinn. I am a retired Hamilton Firefighter/Paramedic and the Secretary-Treasurer of the Ohio Association of Professional Fire Fighters, representing over 11,000 fulltime fire fighters and emergency medical workers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the first responder post-traumatic stress disorder provision in substitute House Bill 80. This provision will allow police officers, fire fighters, and emergency medical service workers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to file a Workers' Compensation claim without requiring a correlating physical injury.

Under current law, psychiatric disorders such as PTSD must have a correlating compensable physical injury to receive benefits from Workers' Compensation. However, according to the American Psychiatric Association, the organization that derives diagnostic criteria for mental disorders, physical injury is not a criterion for diagnosis of PTSD.

Emergency responders witness many traumatic events throughout their careers. Motor vehicle accidents, homicides, suicides, child and elder abuse, animal cruelty, drug overdoses, and fatalities from fires are just some of those tragic events.

These exposures can have both acute and cumulative effects. Whereas one particularly horrific event may be enough to cause one responder to exhibit at least seven of the symptoms across the six different criteria needed to make a PTSD diagnosis, the accumulated effect of witnessing many traumatic events can trigger those symptoms in another responder.

In the 1990s first responders were required to have a correlating physical injury along with an exposure to body fluids before Workers' Compensation would pay for infectious disease testing. Oftentimes, the responders were exposed to body fluids through mucosal tissue around the mouth, eyes and nose without a physical injury. That law was changed to recognize the exposure without physical injury. Substitute House Bill 80 will provide another commonsense solution for the men and women who witness some of the most traumatic events our society has to offer. Allowing first responders the opportunity to seek treatment and return to work will provide a layer of protection not currently available.

We ask for the committee's support of the first responder PTSD provision in substitute HB 80, thank you for your time and consideration. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.