

Standing Committees

Armed Services and Veterans Affairs – Chair
House Finance
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
Higher Education



Special Committees

Aerospace and Aviation Technology – Chair
Joint Legislative Veterans Caucus – Chair
Third Frontier Commission Advisory Board
Latino Affairs Commission

State Representative Rick Perales

Ohio's 73rd House District: Western Portion of Greene County

House Insurance Committee

House Bill – Recognizing Corrections Personnel

Under Workers Compensation

Sponsor Testimony

18 MARCH 2019

Chair Brinkman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Boggs, and members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of House Bill 81. This bill is a reintroduction of House Bill 733 from the 132nd General Assembly, and seeks to codify in the ORC a requirement for the Administrator of Workers' Compensation or a self-insuring public employer to pay for services used to determine whether a person employed by a detention facility sustained an injury or occupational disease after exposure to another person's blood or bodily fluids under specified circumstances.

Under current law, Workers' Comp covers peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical workers when post-exposure medical diagnoses are required after an incident has taken place. This includes transfer of bodily fluids via the eyes, mouth, and/or an open skin injury. While the previous occupations are covered, our correctional officers and detention facility personnel are left to foot the bill themselves.

It is not a secret that our detention facility personnel face a number of risks given the populations they manage. Corrections officers are often spat upon or in extreme cases attacked by the inmates they supervise. With the current opioid epidemic in Ohio, it is also common for persons in the middle of processing incarceration to “dry out” and begin vomiting and spitting uncontrollably on the corrections personnel attempting to provide care. It is wrong to force these public servants to pay for the same medical care that police, fire, and medical workers receive free of cost. This bill will ensure that our dedicated corrections officers receive the medical care they deserve.

The need for this bill was brought to my attention by Greene County Sherriff Gene Fisher, who has had several personnel classified as “corrections officers” experience financial hardship in fronting the cost of the services many of their peers in police, fire, and EMS receive free of charge. In my office’s research on this bill, we learned of a policy memo from the Bureau of Worker’s Compensation that directs the BWC to cover the costs as they relate to testing for possible opioid exposure. This bill will codify that policy into law, and will close the loophole that our corrections personnel experience in the ORC’s current language.

It is for these reasons that I request favorable consideration of House Bill 81. Chair Brinkman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Boggs, and members of the House Insurance Committee, I again thank you for the opportunity to testify today and would be glad to answer any questions you may have.