

To: Members of the Ohio House Insurance Committee

Fr: Monica Hueckel, Senior Director, Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association
Joe Rosato, Director, Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association

Da: October 22, 2019

Re: HB 308

On behalf of the nearly 16,000 physician, resident and medical student members of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), we write to express our support for HB 308, which would make first responders eligible for Workers' Compensation and disability retirement benefits if diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) without an accompanying physical injury.

The OSMA is grateful to Rep. Patton for his work on this legislation. PTSD is a serious condition, but it is often highly treatable once diagnosed. Ohio's first responders, including peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical workers, go to work every day knowing that they may experience traumatizing situations and may even put their lives on the line in order to protect and serve others. In this role, they respond to traumatic events like fatal medical emergencies, natural disasters, fires, suicides, and violent crimes. Current Ohio law allows first responders to file Workers' Compensation claims for PTSD, but *only* if there is an accompanying physical injury. Unfortunately, this leaves out many who need treatment as PTSD can and does occur without such an injury.

Our association believes that this exclusion is a disservice to the brave individuals serving in such professions. First responders serving their communities in traumatizing crisis situations deserve the same access to benefits that can help them attain proper treatment for PTSD regardless of whether their PTSD is associated with a physical injury that also occurred on the job.

Again, the OSMA thanks the sponsor for his dedication to this important issue. Our members believe that in addition to first responders, emergency medical providers such as physicians in trauma centers and hospital emergency departments might be an appropriate additional professional include in the bill, as these providers are also on the front lines of tragic circumstances and can be exposed to certain experiences that may also result in PTSD.

Thank you for your attention to our comments today about HB 308. Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further.