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Ohio Senate

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Senate Bill 384
Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee
Chairman Schering
Sponsor Testimony – Senator Bob Hackett
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Thank you Chairman Schuring, Vice Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the General Government and Agency Review Committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony regarding Senate Bill 384. SB 384 is concerning compensation, medical benefits, and disability retirement for peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical workers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder arising from employment without an accompanying physical injury.

This bill would use BWC or IC as a model to set up a fund for PTSD coverage for first responders through a different agency, similar to the Children with Medical Handicaps fund housed in the Department of Health. I first recommended the Department of Public Safety, but it could be in the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

By moving the coverage outside of BWC, we are giving a benefit to a specific group as we have many times in the past and "equal protection under the law" does not come into play.

A first responder diagnosed with PTSD without an accompanying injury will be entitled to receive loss time compensation of $\frac{2}{3}$ their weekly wage up to the statewide average weekly wage for no longer than one year. If the condition becomes permanent, the first responder employee can file for long-term disability through their pension plan.

The first responder diagnosed with PTSD will be entitled to receive medical benefits paid from the fund for no longer than one year.

A first responder is ineligible for benefits if the individual is receiving disability benefits from an Ohio pension or SSI-D.

SB 384 would enable the outside agency to enact rules for the administration of the fund including; what treatments are covered by the fund; what prescriptions are covered by the fund; provider eligibility, enrollment, and reimbursement; claimant enrollment procedures; claims processing and administrative cost.

We want to make sure it will be easier for the first responder to qualify for the benefit, diagnosed with PTSD by a psychologist/psychiatrist caused by his employment and not accompanied by a physical injury.

Once again, Chairman Schuring, Vice Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee thank you for the opportunity to speak regarding SB 384, I would be happy to answer any questions.