

Chair, Hackett, Vice Chair Hottinger, Ranking Member Craig, and members on the Senate Insurance and Financial Institution Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf on Sub- HB 81, a bill that 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. Currently, payment or reimbursement is "hit or miss" across the state. 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 perpetrators that are in the middle of incarceration process 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 peacemakers, fire, and EMS 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 paying the cost of the services their peers in peacemakers, 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 close the loophole for bodily fluids exposure that our corrections personnel experience in the ORC’s current language. Throughout the process, there have been some BWC issues amended for the aforementioned groups into this bill that all parties have agreed upon such as:

- increasing the funeral expense benefit cap from \$5,500 to \$7,500 to account for inflation,
- prohibiting an employer from requiring an applicant or employee to pay for a medical examinations that are required as a condition of employment or continued employment,
- prohibits a person from receiving compensation when the person has suffered a wage loss as the direct result of reasons unrelated to an allowed injury or occupational disease,

- allows for a claim for an additional award of compensation for a violation of a specific safety rule to be filed within one year after the injury or death or within one year after a disability due to occupational disease begins.

Along with these amendments I am also ready to propose an obvious amendment to include exposure to drugs or other chemicals. We all know that the damage that any exposure to harmful drugs or chemicals can cause with our current opioid crisis. I want to ensure that these correctional officers are protected from any inmates or others coming into the detention centers that may have any dangerous substances on them. Much like bodily fluids, the exposure of drugs and other chemicals can have life-lasting negative effects, and it is our job to protect these employees that do so much for us.

It is for these reasons that I request favorable consideration of Sub-House Bill 81. Chair Hackett, Vice Chair Hottinger, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee, I again thank you for the opportunity to testify today and would be glad to answer any questions you may have.