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Chief Tom O'Brien
Senate Bill 118 Proponent Testimony
Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee
April 17, 2018

Chairman Hottinger, Vice-Chair Hackett, Ranking Member Brown and members of the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 118 regarding firefighters, peace officers and emergency medical workers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD. My name is Tom O'Brien and I am the Chief of the Liberty Township Fire Department.

Senate Bill 118 would allow firefighters, peace officers and emergency medical workers that have been diagnosed with PTSD to receive compensation and benefits, even without an accompanying physical injury, from Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation. The individual suffering from PTSD would be eligible for compensation and benefits for up to one year.

The members of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association and firefighters throughout Ohio put themselves into hazardous situations that can be traumatic and leave a lasting impact on those involved. The unfortunate reality to keep in mind during these hearings is that untreated or misdiagnosed PTSD can have devastating consequences. PTSD is associated with other mental health conditions, such as substance abuse, depression, violence and increased risk of suicide.

Having been diagnosed and in treatment for this terrible condition after being in a traumatic Fire Engine accident 14 years ago, this bill hits close to home. The ability to cope with this condition is dependent upon many factors. All first responders react differently to the traumas they face everyday at work. The passage of this bill would be a giant step towards aiding workers diagnosed with PTSD.

On behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association, I urge the committee to support Senate Bill 118. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.