

October 22, 2019

Good morning distinguished members of the House Insurance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jason Mayberry. I have been employed with the City of Columbus Division of Fire for nearly 25 years. I am the Executive Assistant to The President of The Columbus Firefighters Union Local 67. One of my primary responsibilities is to direct our members to the appropriate care needed for their immediate needs. For orthopedic injuries, cardiac and respiratory issues, cancer advocacy, and mental health resources.

I am not here to offer scientific evidence, nor am I here to argue from a labor relation perspective. I am here to offer testimony as to a real concern that arises on a weekly basis in my office. PTSD and other mental health diagnosis are a harsh reality in the first responder field. We have worked tirelessly at identifying and providing the highest quality care for our members, many of these caregivers have affected great outcomes. Unfortunately, only a handful of the members that need this care, seek it.

The most problematic factor that inhibits the members from utilizing these resources is time. It is a weekly occurrence to have a member inquire about continuity of care, that may require them to take time off work for a period of time that they may or may not have. Mental health effects new employees as well as the seasoned and many times they do not have the sick time to take for treatment. When employers fight the most obvious of injuries through ill-intentioned appeals processes. Most members fear there is no recourse for lost time, especially for mental health claims.

When the ethos of a profession is to enter an incident with the intensity and adrenaline that first responders do. It not only compounds the severity of the experienced trauma but necessitates a quick response. So when a member comes to us looking for a resource that may require time off from work duties and they refuse the care because of not having said time, it saddens me to know that we have let them down and that their mental health may go unchecked and develop into a more severe diagnosis.

I ask that today we partner in taking care of those who take care of us by allowing them the time to be cared for.

Thank you very much,

Jason Mayberry

Local 67 Executive Assistant