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**Sponsor Testimony**

**Senator Edna Brown**

**Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee**

**November 14, 2017**

Chairman Hottinger, Vice Chair Hackett, and fellow members of the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee, thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 118 today. This bill would enable peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical workers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) arising from employment without an accompanying physical injury to be eligible for compensation and benefits under Ohio Workers’ Compensation Law.

Post-traumatic stress disorder can occur after an individual experiences a traumatic or life-threatening event. While PTSD can happen to anyone, the percentage of people diagnosed with the disorder tends to be especially high among veterans and first-responders due to the nature of their work. PTSD can severely interfere with an individual’s wellbeing, potentially leading to substance abuse, alcohol addiction, depression, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping. If left untreated, the condition can worsen.

As this legislation is considered, I want to emphasize several things.

First, the issue of PTSD impacts first responders in all of our districts. We rely on these people every day to protect and save the lives of others; they willingly put aside their own safety to secure ours. We owe them the ability to receive the proper treatment and care that they need.

Secondly, I think it’s important to highlight that we are not talking about people permanently leaving the workforce after receiving BWC benefits. Under this bill, a person would be eligible for compensation and benefits for up to one year. Additionally, they would be prohibited from receiving a disability benefit from a state retirement system for PTSD during the time period in which the person is receiving compensation under the Workers’ Compensation Law.

Our goal is to give first responders the resources they need to deal with PTSD quickly and effectively when the symptoms first appear. By providing treatment right away, we can help these brave men and women heal and continue serving their communities.

This is a bipartisan issue, and I’m grateful that Senator LaRose is joining me as a primary sponsor of this important legislation. I urge my colleagues to recognize all of the good this bill does for an invaluable group of people.

Thank you and I will be happy to join Senator LaRose in answering any questions.