



**FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE OF OHIO, INC.**

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**GWEN CALLENDER**

House Finance Committee

Testimony on Substitute House Bill 80

June 4, 2019

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer and Ranking Member Cera,

My name is Jay McDonald, and I am an active law enforcement officer with the City of Marion. I am also the Immediate Past President of the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio and currently serve as its Legislative Committee Chair. I am here on behalf of the 25,000 active and retired law enforcement officers who make up the FOP of Ohio in support of HB 80 which was recently amended with language that would treat post-traumatic stress disorder like any other on the job injury.

The FOP strongly urges you to vote in favor of requiring the Bureau of Workers Compensation to cover Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for first responders. The FOP has been advocating for this change for nearly seven years. We are long past the time where this change should have become law. It is critically important to provide coverage, through BWC, for first responders who experience PTSD. Failing to treat PTSD often leads to death through suicide and increases illegal drug use and alcoholism among first responders. Once identified, PTSD can be treated effectively allowing first responders to continue their careers serving our great state.

The addition of PTSD in HB 80 is limited to public employee first responders and one mental health condition. We are sure you have heard arguments that this change in law will open floodgates of claims bankrupting BWC. BWC is more than capable of providing this important coverage to those who risk their lives to serve our communities. As to the rush of claims, no one other than an actuary can make an educated guess as to how many claims will be filed. BWC has been unable to produce evidence that this rush will occur and how many there may be. They have suggested that 18% of first responders have PTSD at any one time. This figure does not reflect the number of first responders who will file a claim.

The goal for the FOP is for the treatment and prevention of PTSD. As the VA has shown, PTSD is treatable, and those who suffer from it can lead productive careers. However, ignoring PTSD destroys families and lives. Your support of the amendment to HB 80 will be rewarded in the lives you will save and the families that will be preserved.