



Sponsor Testimony on House Bill 556

State Representatives George Lang and Niraj Antani

House Insurance Committee

Good morning Chairman Brinkman, Ranking Member Boggs and members of the House Insurance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 556.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a severe condition that occurs in individuals who have first-handedly experienced or observed a traumatic event. Certain scenarios trigger individuals, bringing them back to that traumatic event and causing extreme reactions, both emotional and physical. These triggers can range from the anniversary of the traumatic experience, to a story on the news, to overhearing a conversation while walking down the street.

While sometimes these traumatic experiences result in a physical injury, individuals do not need to be injured physically to experience PTSD.

The toll PTSD can take on a person's mental and physical health can be difficult to overcome without support.

House Bill 556 would create a state post-traumatic stress disorder coverage fund for first responders through the Department of Public Safety.

Under current Ohio Law, individuals with PTSD do not qualify for employer paid disability benefits under Ohio's workers' compensation system without an accompanying physical injury.

House Bill 556 would ensure our first responders receive the proper compensation and benefits they need when diagnosed with PTSD arising from employment.

Every public employer employing one or more peace officers, firefighters, or emergency medical workers would pay annually on or before December 31 into the state post-traumatic stress disorder coverage fund the amount of estimated annual premium the director of public safety fixes for the public employer.

By creating a new fund outside of workers' compensation to provide first responders with PTSD coverage, the state provides first responders with more treatment options for PTSD while maintaining the integrity of the workers' compensation system that is designed to only cover physical injuries. The startup costs of \$44 million for the fund would be paid out of unclaimed funds.

Additionally, the bill will provide time-off compensation and medical benefits for first responders diagnosed with PTSD at the same level as currently provided by BWC.

House Bill 556 is an incredibly important piece of legislation that intentionally protects our first responders as they go out into our communities and protect us each and every day. As they fight for our lives, we should be fighting for theirs and House Bill 556 is a simple way to do this.

Thank you Mr. Chair, Ranking Member Boggs and the rest of the committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 556. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.