

Statement by

Kathrine Murphy Hardin, Mother of Trever Andrew Murphy, a Child Whose Lost His Life Due to PTSD

Committee May 20, 2020

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member O'Brian and esteemed members of the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee.

My name is Kathrine Murphy Hardin, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here today to represent myself, my family and for all the first responder workers that have been diagnosed with PTSD arising from employment and accompanying physical injury who need a voice.

I am here today with a heavy heart to give you a firsthand view of how my son and many others like him are encountering mental stress related scenes on a daily bases at work and how those occurrences are creating a condition called PTSD. So many of these men and woman that are affected by PTSD who cannot or no longer have a voice. Those who did not make it past the demons that they struggle with, or the stigma that they live beneath. Afraid of being recognized for fear of retaliation from those around them in their daily jobs, or the general public that views them as the strong ones that provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations.

They are just trying to press forward to live the life they deserve to have. It is a privilege to speak on their behalf, for their families and talk about how House Bill 308 could change each of their paths.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ME AND MY FAMILY

It was a typical Friday. I woke up to a nice spring morning, made it into work and was completing imaging studies at the Vet Hospital when I got a call around 11 am. It was one of my sons Firefighter friends named Shawn. I knew he'd never call me at work unless there was something important that I needed to know. Unfortunately, it was that call that ever parent dreads. I could hear something wrong in his voice when he spoke and the words that followed were knee jerking and earth shattering. Words that rocks every parent to the core. Katie, I'm sorry. And he kept repeating that. Then he uttered the words "Trever is dead". I still remember my whole world being shattered. The moment I screamed those words that "This can't be true". And "NOOOOOOO"

I remember dropping to my knees, screaming and crying and not a soul was there to help me. I was in a lead lined room all by myself with a closed-door editing images and no one was going to hear me scream. After that was such a blur. I believe that I staggered into the office like a

zombie, tears streaming down my face and I had no energy to move but knew I had to get to my son.

I remember rushing out of work and driving myself to my sons' home where I was held by the Columbus Police Department Officer and told that I was not allowed to be in the scene of the crime. My head spinning trying to wrap around this. What crime??? What did my son do? He was not a criminal. He was a hero to many, and a God send to his family. Why is this now a crime?

Let me digress if I may:

Trever Andrew Murphy. He is my 29-year-old son. He was that "All American Boy" depicted in every Norman Rockwell painting. He was loved no matter where he went. He was a one of a kind special person with a heart of gold. He wore his heart on his sleeve and was brutally honest. Trever was an Honor student throughout his entire school age. He had perfect attendance up to only 1 year in High school and was mad at himself for missing that. He was involved in church, baseball, scouting, fishing and band. Trever played trumpet, drums, piano and many other instruments. He won the John Phillip Sosa Award for music excellence, was elected into the Junior Honor Society in 8th grade and continued with that group throughout high school. He was an Ambassador in high school helping with freshmen and sophomores for 2 years. Earned multiple WISE and PRIDE awards in Southwestern City Schools for Music Excellence, Individual Academic Accomplishments, and Individual Leadership Accomplishments. Trever graduated in the Top 10 of his class in 6th place with Honors of over 500 students. Trever was a community representative, loved God, friends and especially family. He was one our 4 sons and an outstanding brother and yet 1 of many brothers in a much larger Firefighter brotherhood.

With all this said, Trever knew from the age of 3 what he wanted to be. He was born to be a Firefighter. He lived and breathed to one day serve his community as a 1st responder.

Trever attended Columbus State Community College directly after high school in 2009 into the Firefighting/EMT program. Trever didn't just graduate but placed top in his class in 2013 as a confident and versatile FF/EMT.

Since then he has worked in a few departments in and around Columbus, an ER paramedic at Dublin Methodist Hospital, a Captain for a top Ambulatory transport company, a preceptor teaching at CSCC training our future FF/EMT's and finally wound up into a fulltime position at Orange Township Delaware and part time at St. Albans Alexandria OH.

But each of them the same:

Quote from Student

Angela Emille Shankland

April 14, 2019

Mornings are the hardest for me. I wake up and my head is full of hope for the day, thinking about all the fun things I can do with my daughter, picking up shifts at work, the chores I need to do around the house, whether the weather will start warming up the water enough to sit out at the beach..... I can almost forget about the absolute wreckage this past week has brought. Until I can't. Until it comes crashing down on me and I have to deal with the fact that a dear friend decided to take his own life.

I never expected it. I knew he was struggling, thought he really was feeling better like he said. **Trever Murphy** could light up a room like nobody's business. He was funny, and kind, and smart. And devastatingly cool in a somehow dorky kind of way. At school as our instructor he was hell bent on making us learn something, anything. Like the time he turned to **Emily** and said "feel my intercostal spaces.... no, push harder!" And poor Emily turned bright red like a little ripe strawberry 🍓 or the time I didn't have enough clinical patients towards the end of the semester (yikes)... also, did you know that if you displace the scapula while listening to lung sounds from a patient's back you can hear much clearer?

Cameron and I do, because Murph taught us that. He was also so..... human, in a way that many preceptors or instructors don't always show. He drove me back to my car after one clinical because it was dark and we were on campus. When **Ben** thanked him, he said "it's what brothers do. It's what family does." Murphy would watch us screw up just to laugh.... and then teach us a lesson. But he never failed us. He would show up in lab or testing and it made it seem not so scary, you know? Like if you had Murphy you know you'd make it out okay.

I just wish Murphy made it out okay. It feels like we failed him. And it hurts SO bad.... it feels like swallowing glass down a dry throat.... or stepping on a patch of sand spurs with bare feet (if you know, you know lol) but I know his intention was never to hurt anyone, but to end his hurt. I guess he got to a point where he couldn't do it anymore. Couldn't take the suffering.

It's a suffering I'd gladly support anyone with, if they asked. Even if they didn't ask. We haven't picked an easy life or an easy job. Sometimes we see things or are in situations we have seen a thousand times before and it's easy to just run on autopilot. As if looking into someone's eyes after they've blown their brains out temple to temple but are still awake for five minutes because you got there too early, or watching a husband say goodbye to his wife as you pump her full of epi and breathe for her and break her ribs..... is normal. Something normal people do every day. It's not. And some stuff sticks with you. Like how blue that girl's eyes were as she looked up at you, not seeing you. Or the way that man's voice broke as he told his wife it was ok to let go, and he'd make sure their kids were okay. That's not stuff normal people see, hear, smell, feel..... we are party to some of the most private moments in peoples lives. Their great joys, sometimes, but most of the time their very devastating lows. And it takes a toll, no matter how much you try to pretend it isn't. Sometimes, we all need help.

They call 911 because they're hurt. What do we do when we're hurt emotionally? Who do we call for help?

In the later part of 2018 Trever struggled silently from PTSD caused by his career and personal struggles at home. Many things that he experienced could not stop running through his mind like a broken record and he struggled with those nightmares' day and night. All the tragic scenes that

they would respond to daily to assist the public and private sectors. In January 2019 Trever was exhibiting signs and finally had to take time off due to this condition.

*****Describe his last 2 runs. *****

According to EMS World 2019 were living in an epidemic where:

- Rate of suicide among 1st responders is 5x greater than the General Public
- Only 3.5% of EMS/FF agencies have suicide training programs
- 37% of EMT/FF have contemplated suicide vs. 3.7% of the general population.
THIS IS 10 x's greater
- Worse yet 1st responders are a specialized group trained to help others with PTSD, anxiety and other mental illness. So, they know how to circumvent the system and hide behind a curtain of pain. Silently...

There are no specialized inpatient programs established in Central Ohio designated for first responders alone to help. The closest group is an inpatient program in Maryland at the IAFF Center of Excellence Rehab and Treatment Center in Marlboro MD.

By taking them to MD, you remove them from their entire support system. The only help here is small group usually designated for military or outpatient programs like True North.

And the stigma that they need to be the strong tough people that have to suck it up and be the Tough Guys

These circumstances only worsen their PTSD.

Currently in this time of a global pandemic, these men and woman have not even backed down from their desire to help others. They continue in their line of duty to help take care of the masses who are sickened with a COVID-19 Corona virus that has encompassed the world with little to no PPE to help protect themselves. That should elaborate the extent of what these brave men and woman are willing to endure to help save each and everyone of us in our worst moments. These selfless and honorable people are risking everything to save us around the world.

On the day before my sons' suicide, he had a fit for duty eval exam. The last I heard from Trever he thought he had blown this exam. We do not know exactly what was said to him. We only know how he perceived what was relayed to him. It made him think he had ruined the chance of returning to what he did "BEST" BEING A FF/EMT.

Had my son had an opportunity to have Workman's Comp available to him rather than thinking he had run out of sick time in April, so he could be off work and receive the needed treatment for his PTSD/ Anxiety, I believe he would still be with us today.

Trever was never able to return to what he was. On April 12th Trever hung himself in his bedroom closet where his roommate discovered his lifeless body as his dog Bailey (Siberian Husky) lie waiting for him to revive.

As a grieving mother I ask and beg your committee to please consider House Bill 308 and what it would do to help our 1st responders.

Frankly, we need to help those people who help us.

Thank you for your time.