



## OHIO PATROLMEN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

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June 17, 2019

Senator Bob D. Hackett  
Chairman Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee  
Senate Building  
1 Capitol Square  
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Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chairman Hottinger, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee, the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (OPBA) supports House Bill 80. My name is Brian Holb. I am a former firefighter/paramedic, but I am here today in my capacity as a representative for the nearly 8,000 active and retired police officers, sheriffs' deputies, corrections officers, and dispatchers represented by the OPBA. This bill makes changes to existing state law that will impact the day to day lives of our members. The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) provisions in this bill are critical to the mental health of our members.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the first responder PTSD provision in HB 80. This provision will allow police officers, fire fighters, and emergency medical service workers diagnosed with PTSD to file a claim with the Bureau of Workers Compensation (BWC) without requiring the correlating manifestation of a physical injury. Under current law, psychiatric disorders such as PTSD must have a correlating compensable physical injury to receive benefits from the BWC. Physical injury, however, is not a criterion for a diagnosis of PTSD.

First responders witness traumatic events daily. Sometimes, many during the same shift. These events include homicides, suicides, child and elder abuse, drug overdoses, fire deaths, and motor vehicle accidents. These exposures have both acute and cumulative effects. Everyone is different and impacted in different ways by these events.

The OPBA strongly urges you to vote in favor of requiring the BWC to cover PTSD for first responders. The OPBA believes the mental health of our members is paramount and allows them to better serve the public. This change is long overdue. Failing to treat PTSD leads to death through suicide and increases illegal drug use and alcoholism among first responders. PTSD is highly treatable, allowing first responders to continue to have fulfilling careers.

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Under HB 80, the treatment of PTSD is limited to public employee first responders. We believe this is proper and will curtail the filing of claims to those who truly need treatment. This will not bankrupt the BWC, which is more than capable of providing this coverage to those who serve our communities.

The OPBA's goal is to ensure our members have access to treatment for job related PTSD. PTSD is highly treatable, but ignoring it destroys families and careers. Your support of HB 80 will be rewarded with the appreciation of those who suffer from PTSD and their families.

On a personal note, several coworkers throughout my career as a firefighter/paramedic took their lives because of untreated job-related trauma. When left untreated job-related trauma results in the psychiatric disorder of PTSD. Additionally, several others suffered job loss, demotion, discipline, and disruption to their homelife.

The OPBA urges you to vote yes on this bill and provide this much needed coverage for Ohio's first responders. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

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