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House Bill 545

House Civil Justice Committee
Committee Chairman Hillyer
Vice Chair Grendell
Ranking Member Galonski

Re: House Bill 545

To whom it may concern:

The Hamilton County Sheriff's Office is writing to express our support for House Bill 545 introduced by you a few weeks ago.

National research indicates that the exposure to the trauma experiences of others is an occupational challenge for the fields of victim services, emergency medical services, fire services, and especially law enforcement. Living with this vicarious trauma causes first responders to suffer from higher levels of depression, anxiety, and PTSD compared to the general population. Due to significant stigma around mental health, many first responders delay or avoid seeking treatment, resulting in difficulties personally and professionally. Establishing a peer support program within an agency fosters a culture of caring, mutual support, professional self-awareness, and positive and constructive feedback. Peer support teams are essential to help break down the cultural barriers that exist, raise mental health awareness, and promote overall first responder wellness. This includes providing access to resources that are evidenced-based treatment programs which can save lives, careers, marriages, and relationships

This legislation will provide a structure to eliminate barriers agencies face when integrating successful peer support programs into their departments. House Bill 545 will provide confidentiality protections critical to successful mental health support in a first responder culture. Further, House Bill 545 will ensure we may better address wellness with first responders, so first responders are better able to serve our communities.

Sincerely,

SHERIFF *Charmaine McGuffey*

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