



TRI-STATE PEER SUPPORT TEAM

<https://tsfirstresponderpst.org/>

March 31, 2022

Chairman Hilyar

Vice Chair Grendell

Ranking Member Golonski

Re: Ohio House Bill 545

House Civil Justice Committee,

We are writing to express our full support for HB 545 to allow for the much needed privileged communication for trained peer supporters and first responders in Ohio. The Tri-State First Responder Peer Support Team was founded due to three line of duty deaths in our area, so we were built because of these crises by first responders. Over the past four years our team has built a multijurisdictional, multidiscipline PEER Support Team including over twenty-five different agencies and departments in the Southwest Ohio region. Our goal is to create awareness about the mental health of first responders. Because of the resources we developed to help when a crisis occurs, we now focus on prevention and early intervention focused on peer support. First responders can be strong mentally and emotionally and we believe that focusing on prevention and early intervention can keep them from falling into mental health crisis.

We have trained more than 250 peer supporters in our regional team and we have helped police, fire, dispatch and corrections develop peer support in their departments. Peer support teams were designed to help with incident related stress and was expanded to address personal issues for first responders. Many first responders are cautious about sharing because of implications of being weak, and potential job loss if they indicate they have suicidal thoughts. Peer support is a way to help first responders stay mentally fit and ready to serve our community. H.B.545 will help to allow privileged communications between team members and will help to eliminate the stigma associated with behavioral health issues.

Very Respectfully,

Amy Foley

Co-Founder Tri-State Peer Support Team

Ed Von Lehmden

Co-Founder Tri-State Peer Support Team