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Legislation Gives Public Safety Workers Support Following Traumatic Events

Ensures PTSD/PTSD is covered by workers compensation insurance

SALEM – Public safety officials including firefighters, police officers and community corrections officers, would be eligible to receive the support they need in the aftermath of a traumatic on-the-job event under legislation that passed the Oregon House of Representatives today.

[Senate Bill 507](#) allows public safety officials, following a post-traumatic stress disorder/injury (PTSD/PTSD) diagnosis by a psychiatrist or psychologist, to take the necessary time to recover under workers compensation insurance.

“Our hardworking public safety officials experience terrible trauma in pursuit of keeping our communities safe and healthy,” said Rep. Anna Williams (D-Hood River) who carried the bill on the floor. “For all that they do for us, this is the least that we can do for them. People need time to recover from traumatic experiences and we should be doing our part to make that happen.”

In public testimony to the committee, Karl Koenig, president of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council, discussed the importance of early treatment in the long-term health and wellbeing for individuals who have PTSD or PTSD.

“...we know there are workplace exposures that have a profound effect on a public safety professional’s career. It can be positive, personally enriching and knowing we are doing the right thing,” Koenig wrote in testimony. “Unfortunately, it can also affect their mental health, livelihood, their families and the public we serve.”

Rep. Paul Holvey (D-Eugene), a chief sponsor of the legislation, said that the unique working conditions experienced by public safety workers necessitates a different level of support.

“For the heroes who regularly, without thought of consequence to themselves, put their lives on the line to keep all of us safe, this legislation is a common-sense step forward,” Rep. Holvey said. “Though we cannot prevent these workers from experiencing traumatic events, we can be there to support them when they need it most.”

Joining Rep. Holvey as a chief sponsor on the legislation was Sen. James Manning Jr. (D-Eugene) and Sen. Lee Beyer (D-Springfield). A bipartisan, bicameral group of 24 legislators signed on as sponsors of the legislation.

The bill, which passed 58 to 0, now goes to Gov. Kate Brown.

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