



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Salem, OR

### NEWS RELEASE

March 14, 2019

CONTACT: Rick Osborn 503-986-1074  
[Rick.osborn@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Rick.osborn@oregonlegislature.gov)

### **Senate supports law enforcement personnel's mental health**

*Tandem bills ensure officers remain mentally fit for the tough job they do*

SALEM – A pair of bills that passed in the Oregon Senate will help ensure individuals employed in law enforcement – an emotionally and physically stressful field – are psychologically fit for the job and that, once they are employed in the field, personnel are adequately supported by their employers.

[Senate Bill 423](#) – which passed by a 30-0 vote on the Senate floor today – requires law enforcement agencies to have licensed mental health professionals screen applicants. [Senate Bill 424](#) – which passed by a 30-0 vote today on the Senate floor – requires law enforcement agencies to establish mental health wellness policies for addressing those issues related to law enforcement professionals within each agency. Both bills received support from the law enforcement community during the committee process. Sen. Lew Frederick (D-Portland) and Sen. James Manning (D-Eugene) carried the bills.

Currently, the minimum statewide qualifications to be employed in law enforcement include citizenship, education, criminal records and physical health. Law enforcement professionals also must be of good moral fitness. Lack of moral fitness can include, for example, false arrests, confessions or evidence; intimidation; brutality; corruption; or sexual abuse. Other forms of misconduct can lead to an officer losing a license. Senate Bill 423 adds a psychological screening to the list of requirements that an applicant must meet before they can become law enforcement professionals.

“Law enforcement personnel see the most heinous things that people do to each other,” said Manning, a former police officer. “I still remember the first homicide scene that I went to. I remember the sights, the sounds, the smells. It sticks with me every day. It’s a hard job and we need to take care of our law enforcement personnel; not just their physical wellbeing, but their mental health. As someone who wore the uniform, I know what those jobs are like. They are focused on helping other people. We need to make sure we are taking care of them.”

Several studies – including the Buffalo Cardio-Metabolic Occupational Police Stress study and work built upon its findings – show that law enforcement officers have higher stress levels than the general population and correspondingly higher levels of stress-related diseases. A couple of law enforcement agencies in Oregon – Hillsboro Police Department and Bend Police Department – already make mental wellness an important part of their cultures. Both have developed positive reputations globally for their approaches to addressing the mental health of their officers. Senate Bill 424 requires law enforcement agencies all over the state to establish mental health wellness policies relating to this stressful and dangerous work.

“We ask a lot of the individuals who work in law enforcement,” Frederick said. “It’s their vocation, but they also are people with emotions. As a result, the suicide rates are high among first responders. They see and deal with scenarios that are difficult and sometimes horrific. This legislation provides support to the people whose job it is to keep us safe. It also will help to rebuild trust between law enforcement and the community.”

Senate Bill 423 and Senate Bill 424 now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.

###