

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 1742, An Act to Enhance the Use of Critical Incident Stress Management Teams and to Require Peer Team Support

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of *An Act to Enhance the Use of Critical Incident Stress Management Teams and to Require Peer Team Support*. Law enforcement is called to respond largely to individuals experiencing their worst days or the toughest experiences in their lives. While many of us go to work day to day with the potential of stress, law enforcement, and other first responders know they will only be called upon if someone requires their assistance for safety or acute stress.

The average individual will experience 2-3 critical or traumatic incidents during the course of their lifetime, often involving law enforcement presence or response. However, law enforcement will experience 168-170 critical incidents of traumatic stress throughout the course of their career. Due to this, first responders are classified as the highest-risk population for suicide death, with higher rates of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and substance use disorders. The results of these challenges often lead to officers experiencing high rates of divorce, struggles to maintain their career longevity, retention concerns in the profession, as well as multiple medical concerns such as high rates of cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is an international best-practice model for supporting first responders in navigating critical incidents. It also fosters an environment in which first responders can seek support within a community of peers that understand the complexities that they face on a day-to-day basis. Research following the 9-11 attacks found that CISM, completed with fidelity, was as impactful, and at times more impactful, than psychotherapy. Previous members of this committee have supported the importance of ensuring access by passing previous legislation with the protection of confidentiality, and structure that is required to support those who give so much to others. However, many departments and agencies still do not provide structured interventions. Those that move forward with attempting the initiatives struggle with securing funding and the resources necessary.

The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) is an internationally recognized model and organization that provides researched, best-practice structure for first responder programming. This committee has previously ruled on the structure and requirements of both peer and group support provided to first responders. Information regarding the legal protections, and the ability for support to be provided outside of the department, with confidentiality ([Title 25, §4202: Critical incident stress management teams \(maine.gov\)](#)). By delegating a single point of contact and organization, this committee will be providing support and resources for an underserved and high-risk population. Because of this, NAMI Maine strongly supports the passage of 1747.

ABOUT NAMI MAINE: *Incorporated in 1984, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) is the state's largest grassroots mental health organization. With support from national and regional affiliates, the agency is dedicated to building better lives for everyone impacted by behavioral health concerns. NAMI Maine engages with leaders and community partners at all levels to improve the state's mental health system through collaboration and education.*

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POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA
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