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Testimony in **SUPPORT of LD 82** An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Laws  
by Extending Indefinitely the Presumption Applying to Law Enforcement Officers,  
Corrections Officers, E-9-1-1 Dispatchers, Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services  
Persons Diagnosed with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

I would like to wholeheartedly encourage your support of this bill to remove the sunset provision of the PTSD presumption.

I have seen firsthand the harm that the stigma around PTSD can cause in people who respond to emergencies, traumatic events, and natural disasters. The stigma or “suck it up” mentality not only prevents first responders from seeking help, it actually compounds the trauma by encouraging the idea that you should be able to take the extra stress and horrible things you are exposed to and that you are “weak and not up to the job” if you can’t handle it.

The costs of treatment are another barrier and having a PTSD claim covered (not paid out of pocket) is also a component to getting treatment. Someone who is already feeling resistant to treatment (or stigmatized) is going to use the out of pocket costs as an excuse to avoid treatment.

Additionally, as time goes on and the trauma compounds (either from lack of treatment or new traumas), the untreated PTSD can tear a person apart. And when that happens, it often takes entire families with it.

A first responder who has nightmares almost every night does not sleep well. It’s been proven that lack of sleep is harmful to your health over time all on its own.

A first responder who develops anxiety from the stress and PTSD will often feel as though they are having a heart attack or other physical problems. Costly medical tests are needed to rule out something like a heart attack when, in fact, it is anxiety and PTSD.

In my own attempts to help someone get treatment, I heard “I can’t go for help, they will kick me off the team.” Years went by before the “team” was no longer an issue and by then the damage was severe.

The reality is that responders who take care of both their physical **and** mental health are better equipped to do the job. You can’t be an Olympic athlete without specialized

training and support. So why do we expect our first responders to take on Olympic levels of trauma, but not give them the specialized training and support necessary?

Early intervention and treatment for any injury is proven to reduce the costs of treatment over time and PTSD is no different. The sooner responders can get help (without stigma), the better chances they have for successful treatment and management of what the job requires of them.

Not only will the brave people who put themselves on the front lines thank you for your support of this bill, but their loved ones will as well.