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Testimony of Representative Suzanne Salisbury presenting
LD 439, “An Act to Allow Death by Suicide to Be Considered a Death While in the Line of Duty”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good afternoon Senator Beebe-Center, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Sue Salisbury, and I represent House District 128, which includes part of Westbrook. I am here today to speak in strong support of **LD 439, “An Act to Allow Death by Suicide to Be Considered a Death While in the Line of Duty”**

For years, the emergency services profession was a male-dominated field. Part of that culture resulted in a mindset of “suck it up and move on” after a difficult call. Providers didn’t talk about how a call made them feel and they certainly didn’t express if their mental health was in crisis. These were the jobs of heroes and heroes don’t need counseling or medication. Right?

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, “Public Safety personnel are 5 times more likely to suffer symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression than their civilian counterparts, leading to a higher rate of suicide. More first responders die of suicide than in the line of duty each year.¹”

In June of 2022, the U.S. House passed² the HERO act, aimed at providing much need mental health support for the nation's first responders and healthcare providers. Part of the bill is specifically aimed at collecting data about first responder suicide rates as well as providing resources for intervention and treatment for providers.

These are all good steps as we move forward as a society and talk openly about mental health and the fact that some jobs carry a higher risk of suicide. Acknowledging that these risks are real and directly associated with this line of work is essential to ultimately reducing rates of suicide for those who put their lives on the line for our safety every day.

¹ [Suicide prevention resources for emergency responders \(fema.gov\)](https://www.fema.gov/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/operations/first-responder-mental-health)

² <https://fitzpatrick.house.gov/2022/6/house-passes-rep-s-bipartisan-legislation-to-deliver-mental-health-resources-to-nation-s-first-responders-and-health-care-workers>

Here in Maine, we can support our emergency service workers and their loved ones by changing the statute to reflect this reality and offering some compensation for the family members who are left behind. More is certainly needed, and I am committed to continuing to work towards better prevention and management solutions.

Thank you for your time, and consideration of this bill.