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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"

February 11, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Labor and Housing Committee. My name is Ronnie Green and I reside in the town of Plymouth.

I am here today to speak 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"*

You have or will hear a lot of testimony today regarding PTSD and how it has and continues to affect the lives of our first responders. You will also hear how early intervention is helping in getting people treated and back to work. While the stigma around PTSD and other mental health injuries is getting better and more people are reaching out for help and reaching out earlier, not everyone is. There are several "Old School" first responders out there that are not reaching out because of the stigma and the ongoing fear of retaliation by their employer if they do reach out. There are several that don't have access to early intervention and some that just don't understand the importance of early intervention and good mental health care. There is even a reluctance from some employers to offer help, set up Critical Incident Stress Debriefings, recognize PEER Support Teams, or just send someone to a councilor simply because they don't want to pay.

I personally represent 16 career FD's, everyone north of Augusta all the way to Caribou. I am often called in to represent a firefighter in a disciplinary proceeding. Quite often it doesn't take long to figure out that the root of the firefighters behavior is a direct result of behavioral health issues, stress, and burnout. In most cases we are able to get the FF the help they need through a clinician that specializes in first responders, and we are able to get them back on track.

I too suffer from PTSD, even though I have been retired from active duty for seven years I still have flashbacks that take me to dark places. I have been seeing a clinician every two weeks for a few years, and it helps me process my experiences, and manage my PTSD on a daily basis. My story is quite similar to others you will hear, the many bad calls over the years that were never dealt with, and never properly processed.

(over)

My 5th grandchild was born six months ago, a little boy, Cohen. I went to see him in the hospital the morning after he was born, as the doctor examined him, he held him on his arm in the same fashion I had held infants and performed mouth to mouth CPR on, just that vision took me back to several child death calls. I had to leave the room and go outside to break down crying, it took me well over a month before I was able to gain the courage to hold Cohen.

While we are doing a much better job today than we have in the past eight years or more we are not there yet, PTSD has not gone away and is still a problem today. We can't go backwards in Maine and let this provision in the Workers Comp statute sunset, we need to pass this bill and continue to take care of our first responders moving forward.

Thank You for your time and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Ronnie Green