



**Kristi Mathieson**

26 Haley Road

Kittery, ME 03904

Cell: (603) 969-7496

[Kristi.Mathieson@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Kristi.Mathieson@legislature.maine.gov)

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

February 12, 2025

*Testimony of Representative Kristi Mathieson presenting*  
**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  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor**

Good morning, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and esteemed colleagues on the Labor Committee. I am Representative Kristi Mathieson representing House District 151, which is Kittery. Thank you for your time today. It is my honor to present to you **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.**

In 2017, in the 128th Legislature, LD 848, An Act To Support Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders Diagnosed with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder was enacted. The law amended the definition of mental injury caused by mental stress in the worker's compensation laws. It created a rebuttable presumption that post-traumatic stress disorder is presumed to arise out of and in the course of the worker's employment if a psychiatrist or psychologist diagnoses the

District 151: Kittery

employee as having post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from work stress that was extraordinary and unusual, and that the work stress and not some other source of stress was the predominant cause of the post-traumatic stress disorder. This law had a five year sunset. In 2021, the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature, with LD 467, added 9-1-1 dispatchers and correctional officers to the presumption. In 2022, LD 1879 looked to repeal the sunset. The end result was extending the three year sunset to October of 2025, with additional reporting.

LD 82 before you is a very simple bill. All it does is strike the sunset clause. Original data in the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature showed that the program achieved the following goals: more first responders seeking treatment, more communities and professional associations forming peer to peer counseling groups, and better awareness and acceptance of PTSD amongst a community who sometimes has a hard time admitting weakness or asking for help. This is a very important bill that continues a successful program. By allowing first responders to get treatment early, we not only significantly improve the lives of those who support us and our communities but we avoid the lengthy absence from work that is so expensive to the system. It's a win-win. This is a bipartisan issue.

Dr. Abby Hope Morris, the medical director of the International Association of Fire Fighters Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery, testified in 2022 and one statistic she quoted haunts me. "In a publication looking at trauma exposure among general American adults, 90% of adults had at least one traumatic exposure, and the most common number of potentially traumatic exposures in a lifetime for the general population was 3. In contrast, firefighters routinely encounter as many as four unique potentially traumatic events in response to a single alarm. Thus, firefighters can be exposed to the common lifetime number of

events in a single shift. The numbers are similar for police who are also exposed to a variety equally descriptive traumas as a routine part of their jobs. The overwhelming majority of career first responders work a minimum of 20 years and start in their teens so, therefore, the number of exposures in a year, let alone a lifetime for a uniformed officer is almost unimaginable.”

We send our police, firefighters and EMS workers where we fear or refuse to go, day after day, to clean up after some of the worst experiences – murders, suicides, fires, collapses, rapes, natural disasters and more.

So I ask you, my colleagues, to support law enforcement officers, corrections officers, E-911 dispatchers, firefighters and emergency medical services persons diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. We get a couple of bills a year where we can all agree that a program is worth all of us supporting it. I believe this is one of those.