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LD 467

"An Act To Support E-9-1-1 Dispatchers and Corrections Officers Diagnosed with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder "

To the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,
March 1, 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, I am Brodie Hinckley, Director of the Emergency Communications Bureau at the Department of Public Safety. Please accept this testimony neither for nor against LD 467, An Act To Support E-9-1-1 Dispatchers and Corrections Officers Diagnosed with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health condition triggered by a terrifying event, either experiencing it or witnessing it. For an E-9-1-1 Dispatcher, this is common for them as it is for Law Enforcement, Fire, and EMS responders. An E-9-1-1 Dispatcher is the true first, first responder. Every time they answer 9-1-1, they are talking to somebody on the worst day of their lives. Their mission is to answer the call, send help and keep everybody safe. They need to gather enough information from a caller to "paint a picture" for the first responders, so they know what they will experience when they arrive on location. Every news article you read or watch about a horrifying call starts with an E-9-1-1 Dispatcher. From receiving a call from a young girl that her mother is not breathing to a senior citizen calling 9-1-1 and advising to get the police to the house before his wife comes back, so she doesn't find him, as he hangs himself inside the garage to a child drowning in a pool to a wife calling to report she just shot her husband. The list goes on and on. And the E-9-1-1 Dispatcher can not walk away and go home or take a much-needed break. They need to answer the next 9-1-1 call coming in. They have no idea what they will get for a call when they pick up that phone. The stress can be overwhelming and non-stop.

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This is the day of an E-9-1-1 Dispatcher. Dealing with crisis call after crisis call.

The Maine Workers' Compensation Board is currently engaged in a study of rebuttable presumptions of PTSD claims due to extraordinary stress and will be issuing a report by January 1, 2022. While E-9-1-1 dispatchers are not included in the study, the results could shed necessary light on this area.

Respectfully,

Brodie Hinckley