

# HOUSE BILL 581

E4

2lr2953  
CF SB 446

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By: **Delegates P. Young, Ebersole, Hornberger, and Patterson**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2022

Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Public Safety – Fire, Rescue, or Emergency Medical Services Entities – Peer**  
3 **Support Programs**

4 FOR the purpose of establishing certain confidentiality requirements for peer support  
5 counseling programs for fire, rescue, or emergency medical services entities;  
6 requiring the Behavioral Health Administration to issue a report on certain best  
7 practices relating to peer support counseling for fire, rescue, or emergency medical  
8 services entities and to make certain information regarding peer support counseling  
9 publicly available on the Administration’s website; and generally relating to peer  
10 support programs for fire, rescue, or emergency medical services entities.

11 BY adding to  
12 Article – Public Safety  
13 Section 7–404  
14 Annotated Code of Maryland  
15 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

16 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
17 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

18 **Article – Public Safety**

19 **7–404.**

20 **(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**  
21 **INDICATED.**

22 **(2) “PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAM” MEANS A PROGRAM**  
23 **PROVIDED BY A FIRE, RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITY OR THE**  
24 **INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIREFIGHTERS THAT PROVIDES COUNSELING**

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 SERVICES FROM A PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST TO A MEMBER OF A FIRE, RESCUE, OR  
2 EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITY.

3 (3) "PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST" MEANS A MEMBER OF A FIRE,  
4 RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITY OR THE INTERNATIONAL  
5 ASSOCIATION OF FIREFIGHTERS WHO:

6 (I) HAS RECEIVED TRAINING IN PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING  
7 AND PROVIDING EMOTIONAL AND MORAL SUPPORT TO MEMBERS OF FIRE, RESCUE,  
8 OR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITIES WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN OR  
9 EXPOSED TO AN EMOTIONALLY TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE IN THE COURSE OF DUTY  
10 AS A MEMBER OF A FIRE, RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITY; AND

11 (II) IS DESIGNATED BY THE FIRE, RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY  
12 MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITY TO PROVIDE THE SERVICES DESCRIBED IN ITEM (I) OF  
13 THIS PARAGRAPH.

14 (B) (1) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A  
15 PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST OR PEER SUPPORT PARTICIPANT MAY NOT DISCLOSE  
16 THE CONTENTS OF ANY WRITTEN OR ORAL COMMUNICATION REGARDING A PEER  
17 SUPPORT COUNSELING SESSION.

18 (2) PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION DOES NOT APPLY IF:

19 (I) THE COMMUNICATION CONTAINS:

20 1. AN EXPLICIT THREAT OF SUICIDE, THE DISCLOSURE  
21 OF WHICH THE PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST BELIEVES IS NECESSARY TO AVOID A  
22 SUICIDE ATTEMPT;

23 2. AN EXPLICIT THREAT OF IMMINENT AND SERIOUS  
24 BODILY HARM OR DEATH TO A CLEARLY IDENTIFIED OR IDENTIFIABLE INDIVIDUAL;

25 3. INFORMATION RELATING TO THE ABUSE OR NEGLECT  
26 OF A CHILD OR VULNERABLE ADULT, OR ABUSE OR NEGLECT THAT IS OTHERWISE  
27 REQUIRED TO BE REPORTED BY LAW; OR

28 4. THE ADMISSION OF CRIMINAL CONDUCT;

29 (II) THE DISCLOSURE IS AUTHORIZED BY EACH PEER SUPPORT  
30 PARTICIPANT WHO WAS A PARTY TO THE COMMUNICATION; OR

31 (III) A COURT OF COMPETENT JURISDICTION ISSUES AN ORDER

1 OR SUBPOENA REQUIRING THE DISCLOSURE OF THE COMMUNICATION.

2 (3) BEFORE THE INITIAL PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING SESSION WITH  
3 A PEER SUPPORT PARTICIPANT, A PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST SHALL INFORM THE  
4 PEER SUPPORT PARTICIPANT IN WRITING OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY PROVISIONS IN  
5 THIS SUBSECTION.

6 (c) (1) ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1, 2024, THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
7 ADMINISTRATION SHALL DEVELOP A REPORT ON BEST PRACTICES AND  
8 PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAMS,  
9 INCLUDING:

10 (i) GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING AND OPERATING PEER  
11 SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAMS;

12 (ii) GUIDELINES FOR TRAINING AND CERTIFYING PEER  
13 SUPPORT SPECIALISTS;

14 (iii) A CODE OF ETHICS FOR PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS;

15 (iv) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR  
16 PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS;

17 (v) SUGGESTIONS ON DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIALITY RIGHTS  
18 TO ANY POTENTIAL PEER SUPPORT PARTICIPANTS;

19 (vi) INFORMATION ON THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEER  
20 SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAMS USED BY FIRE, RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY  
21 MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITIES;

22 (vii) INFORMATION REGARDING ANY DIFFERENCES IN THE  
23 TYPES OF PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAMS OFFERED BETWEEN EACH TYPE  
24 OF ENTITY; AND

25 (viii) INFORMATION ON THE ROLE OF SENIOR MEMBERS OF FIRE,  
26 RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ENTITIES IN SUPPORTING ACCESS TO  
27 MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES.

28 (2) FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF THE REPORT REQUIRED  
29 UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
30 ADMINISTRATION SHALL MAKE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION PUBLICLY  
31 AVAILABLE ON THE ADMINISTRATION'S WEBSITE:

1                           **(I) THE PUBLISHED REPORT; AND**

2                           **(II) A LIST OF PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST TRAINING**  
3 **PROGRAMS.**

4           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
5   October 1, 2022.