



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 565 – Police Officers – Mental Health – Employee Assistance Programs

SPONSOR: Senator Washington, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: February 20, 2020

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 565**, which would require law enforcement agencies across the state to develop and implement an employee assistance program designed to protect the mental health of police officers.

Police work is inherently dangerous, and often exposes first responders to the worst that humankind has to offer. Police work is physically, emotionally, and mentally demanding, compounded by incredibly stressful work environments as officers insert themselves into chaotic scenes where they witness broken homes, abusive relationships, horrific violence, and the loss of life due both to accidents and acts of violence. Officers may also be called upon (thankfully, very rarely) to make split-second life or death decisions, with life changing consequences for everyone involved.

There are very few jobs which expose employees to the level of mental trauma a typical police officer will face during their career. Providing basic mental health services to such employees, in an effort to allow them to prepare for, adapt to, and recover from the stress and trauma which cumulates daily, should be a requirement for all law enforcement agencies.

The Prince George's County Police Department has long enjoyed access to mental health services, both through the County's Employee Assistance Program as well as their internal Psychological Services Division. However, we know that some officers across the state do not have easy access to similar services.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 565** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.