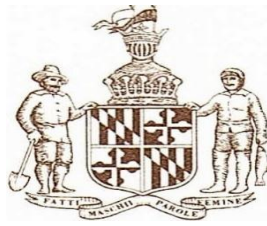


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Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations and Health Facilities
Public Health and Minority Health Disparities



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SUPPORT

HB 439 - Workers' Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – 9-1-1 3 Specialists

February 15, 2022

Dear Chairman Wilson, Vice-chair Crosby, and members of the Economic Matters Committee,

HB 439 would make Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) a presumptive job related injury under Worker's Compensation for 9-1-1 specialist, known professionally as Public Service Access (or Answering) Point - aka PSAP - personnel. It arose as a unanimous recommendation of the Commission to Advance Next Generation 911 Across Maryland in its final year. You need only to listen to a few 9-1-1 calls reported in the media to understand how stressful the job is and why an estimated 18-24% of 9-1-1 operators are found to suffer from PTSD.

As the public, we hear snippets of calls and remark, both favorably and unfavorably, on the demeanor, knowledge, and performance under pressure of the 9-1-1 operator as she or he responds to the emergency, gathers relevant information, determines and deploys appropriate response resources, and keeps the other party on the line until emergency responders arrive at the scene. Our admiration is appropriate, but cold comfort for those who, whether due to cumulative trauma exposure or to a single, particularly traumatic incident, develops debilitating, emotional-psychological symptoms.

Documented health impacts of trauma and stress include PTSD, depression, anxiety, increased suicide risk, burnout, despondency, stress headaches, substance dependence, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and musculoskeletal disorders. For too long, we've operated under a couple of misconceptions:

First, that stresses recognized as "coming with the job" are easily managed by "true" professionals. The corollary therefore being, anyone experiencing health impacts from those stresses was responsible for their own health outcomes and not entitled to job related compensation.

Second, and particular to the professionals addressed by this legislation, is that for an experience to cause PTSD, one had to have SEEN it and not just HEARD.

Both presumptions are wrong on their face, and there is overwhelming scientific, sociological and anecdotal to the contrary. Here are links to some of the relevant information:

[MANAGEMENT: 911 for Emergency Dispatchers | icma.org.](#)

[The Campaign To Get 911 Dispatchers Workers' Comp For PTSD](#)

[New Colo. law expands workers' compensation for 911 dispatchers](#)

Under HB439, PSAP professionals would still have to prove job-related causality to receive workers compensation benefits for the other, often seen health effects that I've listed, but there would be a presumption of that it is related to the job for the diagnosis of PTSD. This is supported by the data, it is appropriate, it is common since, and it is the right thing to do for those who do so much for our families, constituents and communities. I personally would like us to do more. I strongly urge that we at least do this.

I ask for a favorable report on HB439.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terri Hill'.