
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 963 Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY DAVIS, BURNS, MILLARD, CALTAGIRONE, FREEMAN,
DRISCOLL, READSHAW, LONGIETTI, BIZZARRO, SOLOMON, McNEILL,
D. COSTA, BULLOCK, KINSEY, MACKENZIE, SCHLOSSBERG, RYAN,
NEILSON, V. BROWN, WARREN, WATSON, GOODMAN, HILL-EVANS, KORTZ
AND PASHINSKI, MARCH 27, 2017

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, MARCH 27, 2017

AN ACT

1 Designating the month of September of each year as "Code Green:
2 First Responders Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month."

3 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
4 hereby enacts as follows:

5 Section 1. Short title.

6 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Code Green
7 Month Designation Act.

8 Section 2. Legislative findings and declarations.

9 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

10 (1) First responders, including law enforcement
11 officers, firefighters and paramedics, routinely and
12 courageously confront risk.

13 (2) First responders draw on training and experience to
14 make sound decisions in the middle of a crime scene, four-
15 alarm fire or medical emergency and, when duty requires,
16 experience horrors, trauma and loss that few, if any, can

1 imagine.

2 (3) For many years, the prevailing culture among first
3 responders has been stoicism, any trauma a first responder
4 had gone through was to be dealt with quietly, dealt with
5 alone and the first responder was expected to return to work.

6 (4) Thanks to efforts like The Code Green Campaign,
7 after many decades that culture is changing.

8 (5) The first responder community is learning that
9 emotional health, in addition to physical health, is critical
10 to readiness and that seeking support is a sign of strength
11 and not weakness.

12 (6) The Code Green Campaign was founded in March 2014 by
13 a group of emergency medical services (EMS) professionals who
14 had been growing increasingly concerned about the high rate
15 of suicide among fellow first responders and the lack of
16 discussion about mental health in general in the profession.

17 (7) The Code Green Campaign takes its name from both the
18 color of the mental health awareness ribbon and from the
19 "code alerts" that EMS uses to designate an emergency
20 patient, and by using the symbol of a code green, the idea is
21 that first responders are calling a code alert on their own
22 mental health.

23 (8) The mission of The Code Green Campaign is to first
24 bring awareness to the high rates of mental health issues
25 among first responders and reduce them, then to eliminate the
26 stigma that prevents people from admitting these issues exist
27 and asking for help and also to educate first responders on
28 self and peer care and finally to lobby for systemic change
29 in how mental health issues are addressed by first responder
30 agencies.

1 (9) The campaign raises awareness by giving first
2 responders an outlet to tell individual stories of mental
3 health issues anonymously and republishing those stories so
4 the stories can be viewed by everyone.

5 (10) It also allows those who do not have first-hand
6 experience with mental health issues to see that mental
7 health issues can affect anyone, which will hopefully
8 decrease the stigma.

9 (11) In the future, The Code Green Campaign hopes to be
10 able to provide education to first responders, agencies and
11 communities.

12 (12) More information and additional resources about The
13 Code Green Campaign, suicide prevention and suicide awareness
14 can be found at www.CodeGreenCampaign.org.

15 Section 3. Code Green Month.

16 (a) Designation.--The month of September of each year is
17 designated as "Code Green: First Responders Suicide Prevention
18 and Awareness Month."

19 (b) Proclamation.--The Governor shall issue annually a
20 proclamation calling for observation of "Code Green: First
21 Responders Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month," encouraging
22 first responders to take better care of themselves and urging
23 all residents to better understand the behavioral health issues
24 of first responders.

25 Section 4. Effective date.

26 This act shall take effect immediately.