

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6571

To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to improve the detection, prevention, and treatment of mental health issues among public safety officers, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 26, 2018

Mr. BERA introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to improve the detection, prevention, and treatment of mental health issues among public safety officers, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Helping Emergency
5 Responders Overcome Act of 2018”.

1 **SEC. 2. DATA SYSTEM TO CAPTURE NATIONAL PUBLIC**
2 **SAFETY OFFICER SUICIDE INCIDENCE.**

3 The Public Health Service Act is amended by insert-
4 ing after section 317T of such Act (42 U.S.C. 247b–22)
5 the following:

6 **“SEC. 317U. DATA SYSTEM TO CAPTURE NATIONAL PUBLIC**
7 **SAFETY OFFICER SUICIDE INCIDENCE.**

8 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting primarily
9 through the Director of the Centers for Disease Control
10 and Prevention and in coordination with other agencies
11 as the Secretary determines appropriate, shall—

12 “(1) develop and maintain a data system, to be
13 known as the Public Safety Officer Suicide Report-
14 ing System, for the purposes of—

15 “(A) collecting data on the suicide inci-
16 dence among public safety officers; and

17 “(B) facilitating the study of successful
18 interventions to reduce suicide among public
19 safety officers; and

20 “(2) integrate such system into the National
21 Violent Death Reporting System, so long as the Sec-
22 retary determines such integration to be consistent
23 with the purposes described in paragraph (1).

24 “(b) DATA COLLECTION.—In collecting data for the
25 Public Safety Officer Suicide Reporting System, the Sec-

1 retary shall, at a minimum, collect the following informa-
2 tion:

3 “(1) The total number of suicides in the United
4 States among all public safety officers in a given cal-
5 endar year.

6 “(2) Suicide rates for public safety officers in
7 a given calendar year, disaggregated by—

8 “(A) age and gender of the public safety
9 officer;

10 “(B) State;

11 “(C) occupation;

12 “(D) status of the public safety officer as
13 volunteer, paid-on-call, or career; and

14 “(E) status of the public safety officer as
15 active or retired.

16 “(c) CONSULTATION DURING DEVELOPMENT.—In
17 developing the Public Safety Officer Suicide Reporting
18 System, the Secretary shall consult with non-Federal ex-
19 perts to determine the best means to collect data regard-
20 ing suicide incidence in a safe, sensitive, anonymous, and
21 effective manner. Such non-Federal experts shall include
22 the following:

23 “(1) Public health experts with experience in
24 developing and maintaining suicide registries.

1 “(2) Organizations that track suicide among
2 public safety officers.

3 “(3) Mental health experts with experience in
4 studying suicide and other profession-related trau-
5 matic stress.

6 “(4) Clinicians with experience in diagnosing
7 and treating mental health issues.

8 “(5) Active and retired volunteer, paid-on-call,
9 and career public safety officers.

10 “(6) Relevant national police, and fire and
11 emergency response, organizations.

12 “(d) DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY.—In developing
13 and maintaining the Public Safety Officer Suicide Report-
14 ing System, the Secretary shall ensure that all applicable
15 Federal and State privacy and security protections are fol-
16 lowed to ensure that—

17 “(1) the confidentiality and anonymity of sui-
18 cide victims and their families are protected, includ-
19 ing so as to ensure that data cannot be used to deny
20 benefits; and

21 “(2) data is sufficiently secure to prevent unau-
22 thorized access.

23 “(e) REPORTING.—

24 “(1) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than one
25 year after the date of enactment of the Helping

1 Emergency Responders Overcome Act of 2018, and
2 annually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit a re-
3 port to the Congress on the suicide incidence among
4 public safety officers. Each such report shall—

5 “(A) include such suicide incidence
6 disaggregated by age, gender, and State of em-
7 ployment;

8 “(B) identify risk factors for suicide
9 among public safety officers;

10 “(C) disaggregate rates of suicide by—

11 “(i) occupation;

12 “(ii) status as volunteer, paid-on-call,
13 or career; and

14 “(iii) status as active or retired;

15 “(D) include recommendations for further
16 study regarding the suicide incidence among
17 public safety officers;

18 “(E) identify options for interventions to
19 reduce suicide among public safety officers; and

20 “(F) ensure the confidentiality and ano-
21 nymity of suicide victims and their families, as
22 described in subsection (d)(1).

23 “(2) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—Upon the submis-
24 sion of each report to the Congress under paragraph
25 (1), the Secretary shall make the full report publicly

1 available on the website of the Centers for Disease
2 Control and Prevention.

3 “(f) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ‘public
4 safety officer’ means—

5 “(1) a public safety officer as defined in section
6 1204 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe
7 Streets Act of 1968; or

8 “(2) a public safety telecommunicator as de-
9 scribed in detailed occupation 43–5031 in the Stand-
10 ard Occupational Classification Manual of the Office
11 of Management and Budget (2018).”.

12 **SEC. 3. PEER-SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND**
13 **WELLNESS PROGRAMS WITHIN LOCAL FIRE**
14 **DEPARTMENTS.**

15 Part B of title III of the Public Health Service Act
16 (42 U.S.C. 243 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
17 the following:

18 **“SEC. 320B. PEER-SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND**
19 **WELLNESS PROGRAMS WITHIN LOCAL FIRE**
20 **DEPARTMENTS.**

21 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
22 grants to eligible entities for the purpose of establishing
23 or enhancing peer-support behavioral health and wellness
24 programs within local fire departments.

1 “(b) PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.—A peer-support be-
2 havioral health and wellness program funded under this
3 section shall—

4 “(1) use fire fighters to serve as peer coun-
5 selors—

6 “(A) to assist other fire fighters with
7 issues related to behavioral health, including
8 posttraumatic stress, substance abuse, and co-
9 related disorders; and

10 “(B) to conduct outreach regarding such
11 assistance to fire fighters and their families;

12 “(2) provide training to fire fighters to serve as
13 such peer counselors;

14 “(3) purchase materials to be used exclusively
15 to provide such training; and

16 “(4) disseminate such information and mate-
17 rials as are necessary to conduct the program.

18 “(c) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ‘eligible
19 entity’ means a nonprofit fire service organization with ex-
20 pertise and experience with respect to fire fighter health
21 and life safety.”.

1 **SEC. 4. DEVELOPMENT OF RESOURCES FOR EDUCATING**
2 **MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ABOUT**
3 **TREATING FIRE FIGHTERS.**

4 The Administrator of the United States Fire Admin-
5 istration, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and
6 Human Services, shall develop and make publicly available
7 resources that may be used by the Federal Government
8 and other entities to educate mental health professionals
9 about—

10 (1) the culture of Federal, State, tribal, and
11 local fire departments; and

12 (2) evidence-based therapies for mental health
13 issues common to Federal, State, local, and tribal
14 fire fighters.

15 **SEC. 5. BEST PRACTICES AND OTHER RESOURCES FOR AD-**
16 **DRESSING POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DIS-**
17 **ORDER IN PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS.**

18 (a) DEVELOPMENT; UPDATES.—The Secretary of
19 Health and Human Services shall—

20 (1) develop and assemble evidence-based best
21 practices and other resources to identify, prevent,
22 and treat posttraumatic stress disorder and co-oc-
23 ccurring disorders in public safety officers; and

24 (2) reassess and update, as the Secretary deter-
25 mines necessary, such best practices and resources,
26 including based upon the options for interventions to

1 reduce suicide among public safety officers identified
2 in the annual reports required by section
3 317U(e)(1)(E) of the Public Health Service Act, as
4 added by section 2 of this Act.

5 (b) CONSULTATION.—In developing, assembling, and
6 updating the best practices and resources under sub-
7 section (a), the Secretary of Health and Human Services
8 shall consult with, at a minimum, the following:

9 (1) Public health experts.

10 (2) Mental health experts with experience in
11 studying suicide and other profession-related trau-
12 matic stress.

13 (3) Clinicians with experience in diagnosing and
14 treating mental health issues.

15 (4) Relevant national police, fire, and emer-
16 gency response organizations.

17 (c) AVAILABILITY.—The Secretary of Health and
18 Human Services shall make the best practices and re-
19 sources under subsection (a) available to Federal, State,
20 and local fire fighter, police, and emergency response de-
21 partments.

22 (d) FEDERAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PRO-
23 GRAMS.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services
24 shall work with Federal departments and agencies, includ-
25 ing the United States Fire Administration, to incorporate

1 education and training on the best practices and resources
2 under subsection (a) into Federal training and develop-
3 ment programs for public safety officers.

4 (e) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “public
5 safety officer” means—

6 (1) a public safety officer as defined in section
7 1204 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe
8 Streets Act of 1968; or

9 (2) a public safety telecommunicator as de-
10 scribed in detailed occupation 43–5031 in the Stand-
11 ard Occupational Classification Manual of the Office
12 of Management and Budget (2018).

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