

HELPING EMERGENCY RESPONDERS OVERCOME (HERO) ACT

H.R. 1902

The legislation helps protect fire and EMS personnel by providing funding for peer counseling programs for public safety officers, and collects data on post-traumatic stress among public safety officers to assist in developing best practices and improving measures to recognize, prevent, and treat mental health issues.

Background

Public safety officers, including firefighters and paramedics, are frequently exposed to scenes including traumatic injury and loss of life while on the job. This work takes its toll, and can lead to trauma, post-traumatic stress, and suicide.

Firefighters develop post-traumatic stress at rates comparable to military service members--and much higher than the general population. They also die by suicide at higher rates than the general public. The number of firefighter suicides is estimated to be at least 100 per year by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

The HERO Act would help to address mental health in the fire and emergency services, including by funding peer-support behavioral health and wellness programs within fire departments and emergency medical services agencies to address mental health challenges.

It would also help improve cultural competence among mental health and wellness specialists who assist firefighters.

Ask

▶ Cosponsor the HERO Act (H.R. 1902).

Talking Points

▶ Addressing the First Responder Mental Health Crisis

The rates of suicide and posttraumatic stress among firefighters are higher than the general public. Ensuring firefighters have access to quality peer support and mental health providers can help to lower suicide risks.

▶ Improving Care for First Responders

By improving access to care and cultural competence of providers, the bill will help firefighters receive the support they need.

▶ Protecting Those Who Protect Us

Firefighters put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe. We must ensure that those who risk their health for others receive the support they deserve.

