

Please Support H.R. 1646
The Helping Emergency Responders Overcome (HERO) Act of 2019

Request

Please support passage of [H.R. 1646](#), the Helping Emergency Responders Overcome (HERO) Act of 2019 introduced by Congressman Ami Bera (D-CA) to provide resources to increase recognition and treatment of PTS for EMS practitioners and firefighters, provide grants to establish and assist peer-to-peer support programs, and collect data on EMS practitioner and firefighter suicides.

Please consider expanding this bill to ensure that all 911 medical responders are covered under its provisions.

Background

Emergency medical responders and firefighters are routinely eyewitnesses to scenes of catastrophic incidents involving severe injuries, tragic loss of human life and property loss. The cumulative effects of these exposures on emergency personnel may result in psychological injuries and even suicides.

Studies confirm that rates of post-traumatic stress (PTS) within this workforce are comparable to other high-stress occupations such as law enforcement officers and military combat veterans.

Only in recent years has the link between these professional experiences and PTS and related behavioral health conditions been recognized. Many EMS agencies and fire departments lack the capabilities to assist personnel by providing counseling, support services and coping tools necessary to treat those suffering from PTS and resulting behavioral disorders. In the absence of specialized treatment, some EMS practitioners and firefighters engage in increasingly harmful behaviors including substance abuse, self-harm and suicide. For many, this suffering is a private affair often kept from co-workers, friends and family. Currently, there is no means to accurately capture data regarding the incidences of practitioner and firefighter suicide.

The Helping Emergency Responders Overcome (HERO) Act would help address these insufficiencies by identifying best practices to recognize, prevent and treat PTS among EMS practitioners and firefighters. Specifically, the Act will:

- Establish a grant program to provide peer-support services for EMS practitioners and firefighters.
- Require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop resources for mental health professionals to better understand the culture of these professions, and identify evidence-based therapies for mental health issues common to public safety officers.
- Direct the Centers for Disease Control to collect data on suicides among public safety officers.

Currently, this bill addresses the needs of EMS practitioners and firefighters working for public or non-profit agencies. It does not cover all 911 medical responders.

Contact

To learn more about H.R. 1646 or to co-sponsor, please contact Ryan Uyehara at Ryan.Uyehara@mail.house.gov.

Current Co-Sponsors:

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