



Kansas State Firefighters Association, Inc.

Dedicated to the Safety and Education of the Kansas Fire Service

Organized August 13, 1887

Kevin Flory – President, KSFFA

Written Only Proponent Testimony - SB 491

February 21st, 2022

Good morning Senator Erickson and members of the committee. My name is Kevin Flory and I am the President of the Kansas State Firefighters Association. Our association represents approximately 16,000 career and volunteer firefighters across the state of Kansas.

Our association would like to express our support for SB 491, pertaining to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) within the first responder community. PTSD is an injury that occurs from experiencing a traumatic incident. It sometimes referred to as Post Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI).

The recognition of PTSD under workers compensation is of critical importance. Current trends within the Fire Service are showing continual rising suicide rates. It has risen to enough of a level nationwide, that many cities are actually enacting authorized “stress” leave to try and mitigate these critical incidents when they occur, in an effort to remove first responders from the daily exposure to traumatic incidents and provide them time to heal and process the incident they were involved in. It has been found that often times, the build up of multiple events over time have been the cause of suicide within the first responder community.

At the point a professional medical opinion reaches the conclusion that a responder has been impacted to the point that they cannot work, it is necessary to remove them from that situation. As an employer, it is their duty to take care of employees and cause them no further harm. Having to deal with a prolonged worker’s compensation claim and the extra burden and expenses can often exacerbate an individual’s PTSD problems.

Passage of SB 491 would help clarify the definitions and processes for those employees who are involved in these critical scenarios. It should be everyone’s goal to send all responders home to their families every day in the same or better shape than when they arrive at work. SB 491 will help to assist employers and employees with keeping themselves safe and mentally in shape to deal with the rigors of public safety.

I thank you for taking the time to review this testimony and hope you support this bill to help us support the Safety and Education of the Kansas Firefighter.