



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair and
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: January 30, 2025

RE: **SB 326 – LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES – PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT SB 326**. This bill protects communication and affords certain confidentiality between law enforcement officers and their peer support counselling specialists.

Law enforcement officers face extremely difficult circumstances on the job every day. They put their lives on the line to protect and serve others, and can experience significant trauma when arriving at crash scenes; addressing incidents of domestic violence; investigating shootings and murders; and searching for lost children and vulnerable adults. This cumulative exposure to high-level stress, experienced over years of service, , can threaten the mental and physical well-being of officers, depending upon their individual coping skills and resiliency. It is important, and arguably necessary, that a safe space be created for officers to receive the help they need without fear of retaliation or intimate information being exposed.

SB 326 creates this essential environment and ensures law enforcement officers have access to high quality peer support. This support is an effective and early intervention means to address many mental health and occupational concerns that law enforcement officers face daily. This bill also ensures that information exchanged in peer support settings is held in confidence, and eliminates the potential of peer support specialists being compelled to testify in open court regarding the intimate details shared.

Forty states have or are in the process of approving similar legislation that will legally protect communications between law enforcement officers and their peer support counselling specialists. We hope Maryland will join these states.

This bill prioritizes the mental health of laws enforcement officers and allows them to seek the help they need with confidence. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT SB 326** and urge a **FAVORABLE** committee report.

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