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The Honorable William C. Smith Jr., Chairman
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 326 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Agencies – Peer Support Programs – Support

Chairman Smith,

I am writing to fervently support Senate Bill 326, which will provide legal confidentiality to communications between police officers and their specially trained peers.

The Baltimore County Police Department recognizes that the employees of our agency are its most valuable asset. Situations and demands specific to the field of law enforcement result in unique stressors, which can cause both acute and cumulative stress reactions. These situations may be related to the employee's professional life, personal life, or both. We strive to assist first responders in crisis by mitigating the effects of all forms of stress to which our officers are routinely exposed.

In wake of the devastating loss of Officer Amy Caprio in 2018, FOP Lodge 4 started a Peer-to-Peer support group to bolster the mental wellness of our first responders and dispatchers. Shortly thereafter, our Department created the Peer Support & Wellness Team (PSWT), which consists of two permanently assigned sworn police officers: a sergeant and an officer. They coordinate a larger team of properly trained and recognized peers, who volunteer over and above their normal assignments to help their fellow employees who are experiencing the effects of one or more incidents in which the officer was either directly or indirectly involved. In addition, our PSWT offers advice, guidance, and access to programs that focus on officer safety, wellness, and resiliency via multiple platforms. The resources we currently utilize include outside wellness and resiliency vendors, videos, roll call training, specialized training, educational bulletins, and an app that provides access to a variety of resources.

Peer Support and Wellness Team members, upon acceptance onto the Team, are provided with training and certification on basic individual and group counseling techniques endorsed by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, namely, Critical Incident Stress Management.

Confidentiality is crucial to the success of any Peer Support program. Maryland law does not currently does not provide privilege for communications between a peer and fellow first responders, as some States offer, but this is a vital component of an effective Peer Support program, particularly for law enforcement officers. SB326 will provide the same level confidentiality that is currently enjoyed by Maryland's fire fighters and I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of SB326 as written.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lt. Kathryn Greenbeck
Baltimore County Police Department



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