



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger Chairman and
Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Chief David Morris, Co-Chair, MCPA, Joint Legislative Committee
Sheriff Darren Popkin, Co-Chair, MSA, Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: January 19, 2021

RE: **HB 88 – Police Officers – Mental Health – Employee Assistance Programs**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT HB 88**. This bill requires all law enforcement agencies to develop and implement an employee assistance program for all police officers that the agency employs and provide confidential mental health services.

An amendment is being proposed by the sponsor to change the language on page 2, line 15, “MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATIONS” to “RESILIENCY SESSION.” This amended language further strengthens the bill and assures confidentiality for an officer. The mental health evaluation of an officer is typically performed for a specific purpose such as a fitness for duty and includes a reporting requirement to the commanding officer and/or Chief and Sheriff. A resiliency session has the expectation of complete confidentiality, except for whether or not the officer attended the session, and is used to facilitate an officer's capacity to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to the mental, emotional, and physical effects caused by stress and adversity. This terminology is better suited to the intent of HB 88.

Law enforcement officers face extremely difficult circumstances daily. They put their lives on the line to protect and serve others experiencing trauma when arriving at crash scenes; addressing incidents of domestic violence; investigating shootings and murders; searching for lost children and vulnerable adults. The cumulative exposure to stress experienced over years of service, depending upon individual coping skills and resiliency, may threaten the mental and physical well-being of an officer.

HB 88 prioritizes the mental health of police officers and seeks to reduce the negative stigma of seeking mental health services commonly experienced by members of law enforcement. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT HB 88** and urge a **FAVORABLE** report.