

TO: Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: Jon David Black
DATE: March 1, 2022
RE: Testimony in support to HB 581

I am Assistant Fire Chief Jon Black from the Salisbury Fire Department serving the citizens of Maryland for 39 years with the last 29 in Salisbury as a volunteer firefighter. I also retired from the United States Army with 32 years of service as a Commissioned Officer. I am writing this testimony as someone who has PTSD and has utilized PEER SUPPORT and feel behavior health issues of Fire, Rescue and EMS have been placed as a non priority until recent years. I am in full support of HB 281 as the passing of this bill will improve the behavioral health of all Fire, Rescue and EMS providers by creating guidelines in creating Peer Support entities within the service.

This bill will give guidance to the Fire, Rescue and EMS Community on the expectations of a PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM in the areas of training, operations, and privacy rules. I do have a concern with (B) (2) (I) THE COMMUNICATIONS CONTAINS, 4. THE ADMISSION OF CRIMINAL CONDUCT. My wife is a Clinical Social Worker and this is not listed as an exception to report under the Code that pertains to them. This Bill will be binding giving credibility to PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS & SPECIALIST which is needed for PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS to blossom.

I personally have PTSD and have been seeking treatment since 2005. A major accident occurred that I was involved in recent years severely injuring a subordinate. The PEER SUPPORT TEAM was immediately on hand and talked with all parties for hours and days following through the investigative process. I was fortunate that this PEER SUPPORT assistance was available that my PTSD did not go into a backspin after years of treatment. This group of individuals were trained by the International Association of Firefighters and were by my side the entire time. I eventually returned to active status.

I want to thank all the members of the Health and Government Operations Committee for the opportunity to testify on HB 581. My position again is full support of HB 281 as the passing of this bill will improve the behavioral health of all Fire, Rescue and EMS providers by creating guidelines in creating Peer Support entities within the service.