



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William 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
Natasha Mehu, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: March 1, 2023

RE: **SB 780 – Law Enforcement – Police Officer Employee Assistance Programs – Confidentiality**

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT SB 780**. This bill prohibits a law enforcement officer who has participated in an employee assistance program from disclosing or being compelled to disclose matters that arise during participation in an employee assistance program and prohibits disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act.

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.

SB 780 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. Employee assistance programs are designed to help officers deal with the daily trauma they experience. This information is very personal and should not be disclosed, just like it is not for other professions. SB 780 assures all proper protections are in place and that this information is kept confidential. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT SB 780** and urge a **FAVORABLE** report.