



State of Maryland
Maryland Institute *for* Emergency Medical Services Systems

Wes Moore
Governor

Clay B. Stamp
Chairman, EMS Board

Theodore R. Delbridge, MD, MPH
Executive Director

Senate Bill 527
Fire, Rescue, or Emergency Medical Services Entities –
Peer Support Programs

MIEMSS Position: Support

Bill Summary: SB 527 clarifies statutory language pertaining to peer support programs for fire, rescue and emergency medical services (EMS). The clarifications are important to accurately reflect work that is underway to report on best practices and professional standards for these programs.

Rationale:

- Peer Support programs are an important component of maintaining the psychological well-being of emergency response personnel.
- Peer Support Programs provide voluntary access to individual and group support from peers and mental health professionals, and provide emotional, informational and social support to the first responder community. These Programs can also mitigate adverse psychological effects resulting from events experienced by emergency response personnel.
- Peer Support Programs help emergency responders deal not only with normal human reactions to everyday stresses, but also those these personnel face following abnormal and traumatic events experienced on the job, e.g., line of duty deaths, multiple casualty incidents and other distressing situations.
- Chapter 151 of the 2022 Session tasked the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) to report on best practices and professional standards for peer support programs, including guidelines for establishing and operating peer support programs; training and certifying peer support specialists; and other important program components.
- BHA has convened a workgroup – the Maryland Alliance for Public Safety Support – that is comprised of personnel from across the public safety spectrum with expertise in peer support programs. The report is due on or before October 1, 2024.
- SB 527 clarifies language to reflect accurately the collaborative work that is underway to meet the statutory intent.

MIEMSS Supports SB 527 and asks for a Favorable Report