

March 5, 2024

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and distinguished members of the Finance Committee,

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

Public safety encompasses an array of professionals — from the dispatch call center to each aspect of emergency response and throughout the justice system. We call on these individuals every day to respond to emergencies and sustain our health and safety. These are difficult, often thankless jobs that require a willingness to face tough situations with expertise and composure, frequently while in harm's way.

Post traumatic stress is impacting first responders of every type all across the United States and around the world. Fire fighters, police officers, emergency medical personnel, and 911 dispatchers have record cases of PTSD diagnosis.

We recognize that for many first responders, cumulative trauma and shiftwork can feel overwhelming and take a toll on their mental wellness. Because of the unique nature of this work, NAMI MD believes that first-responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder that was suffered in the line of duty should be entitled to worker's compensation.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.