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February 13, 2025

HB 0076 - Public Safety Officer – Performance of Duties – Death and Disability Benefits

Dear Chairman Barnes and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee,

The Maryland State Fraternal Order of Police **SUPPORTS** House Bill 0076 – **Public Safety Officer – Performance of Duties – Death and Disability Benefits.**

HB 0076 when enacted will mandate that a public safety officer whose death occurs by suicide shall be presumed to have died as a direct and proximate result of an injury sustained in the performance of duties if the officer was diagnosed by a licensed medical or mental health professional with post-traumatic stress disorder, acute stress disorder, or a trauma-and stress-related disorder and the diagnosis resulted due to the nature and performance of the officers' duties.

HB 0076 when enacted will further allow for the members of the Maryland State Firemen's Association, Correctional Officer's Retirement System, Local Fire and Police System, Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System, and the State Police Retirement System to be presumed to be totally and permanently incapacitated for duty and that the condition is directly related to the performance of their duties if diagnosed as written in the paragraph above. This diagnosis shall then be the basis for the member to receive disability benefits or retirement as defined by the individual plans.

I personally want to thank all of the legislators that have submitted and or support this legislation. Over the past few years, the serious issue of mental health and wellbeing of public safety officers has finally become a topic of discussion and the taboo and stigma is slowly fading away. Now that we can openly discuss this issue and seek to get help for the many officers that suffer from emotional and mental issues surrounding the traumas they have seen and been involved in there is hope that we can combat this horrible disease. Our members often see society and life at its worst and the sights, sounds, and emotions they are left to deal with often come with a heavy toll on their mental and physical wellbeing. We are seeing a rise in the efforts and manpower that is now being dedicated towards officer mental health and wellness and that is a positive thing. The price of this mental torture for some officers is PTSD and other stress disorders that ultimately lead to the officer no longer being able to carry out their duties which leads to them having to be separated from service. Some unfortunately turn to suicide to escape the torment they are facing. These two issues lead to a huge impact on the officer and/or their family and **HB 0076** will go a long way to help with the financial burdens that will come with the results of a disability retirement or the aftermath of suicide. **HB 0076** will show to everyone that the State of Maryland cares about their public safety officers and wants to ensure they and their families who have sacrificed so much are taken care beyond the separation of service.

On behalf of the more than 20,000 Courageous Men and Women of the Maryland Fraternal Order of Police we thank you for your support and ask for your **FAVORABLE** vote on **House Bill 0076 - Public Safety Officer – Performance of Duties – Death and Disability Benefits.**

Angelo L. Consoli Jr,
2nd Vice President, FOP, Maryland State Lodge
President, FOP Lodge 89, Prince George's County