

ROBERT O. MCCULLOUGH

Chief of Police



Integrity...Fairness...Service

BALTIMORE COUNTY POLICE

Headquarters
700 E. Joppa Road
Towson, MD 21286
410.887.2214
Fax 410.821.8887
bcopd@baltimorecountymd.gov
www.baltimorecountymd.gov/police

The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 309 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Agencies – Peer Support Programs – Support

Chairman Clippinger,

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 309, which will provide legal confidentiality to communications between police officers and their specially trained law enforcement peers.

The Baltimore County Police Department recognizes that the employees of our agency are its most valuable asset. Situations and demands specific to the field of law enforcement result in unique stressors and often trauma, which can cause both acute and cumulative stress reactions. These situations may be related to the employee's professional life, personal life, or both. Peer Support teams strive to assist first responders in crisis by mitigating the effects of all forms of stress to which our officers are routinely exposed, and to provide needed support and resources when they suffer the effects of traumatic critical incidents.

In wake of the devastating loss of Officer Amy Caprio in 2018, FOP Lodge 4 started a Peer-to-Peer support group to bolster the mental wellness of our first responders and dispatchers. Shortly thereafter, our Department created the Peer Support & Wellness Team (PSWT), which consists of two permanently assigned sworn police personnel, who coordinate a larger team of properly trained and recognized peers, who volunteer over and above their normal assignments to support their fellow employees who are experiencing the effects of one or more traumatic incidents. Our PSWT also supports all officers in our agency by providing guidance and access to programs that focus on officer safety, wellness, and resiliency via multiple platforms.

Peer Support and Wellness Team members, upon acceptance onto the Team, are provided with training and certification on basic individual and group counseling techniques endorsed by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.

Confidentiality is crucial to the success of any Peer Support program. Maryland law does not currently provide privilege for communications between police officers and their peers, but this is a vital component of an effective Peer Support program, particularly for law enforcement officers. HB309 will provide the same level confidentiality that is currently enjoyed by Maryland's fire fighters and I respectfully urge you to issue a favorable report on this bill, as written.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lt. Kathryn Greenbeck
Baltimore County Police Department
Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge #4



Nationally Accredited Since 1984