

HB797: Balancing Firefighter Occupational Health and Public Safety

The Firefighter Occupational Health Crisis



20-30%

Suffer from PTSD

Higher rates than the general population due to repeated exposure to traumatic events.



The Physical Toll

Carrying heavy gear leads to chronic back pain, spinal disc injuries, and musculoskeletal strain.



Chronic Sleep Disruption

Unpredictable overnight calls contribute to cognitive fatigue, cardiovascular disease, and increased injury risk.

Current Treatment Reality & Risk Profile



Common but High-Risk Prescriptions

Firefighters are frequently prescribed opioids for pain and benzodiazepines for anxiety; high risks of addiction, sedation, and overdose.

Risk Factor Comparison

Risk Factor	Opioids	Benzodiazepines	Medical Cannabis
Overdoses Risk	High	Moderate	Extremely Low
Addiction Risk	High	Moderate	Lower
Fatal Overdose Potential	Significant	Possible	Extremely Rare
Respiratory Depression	Yes	Possible	No



Medical Cannabis: A Lower-Risk Alternative

Research suggests cannabis can effectively manage chronic pain and PTSD symptoms with a significantly lower risk profile.

Workplace Safety Safeguards & HB797 Solution



Existing Safety Protocols

Departments maintain safety through reasonable suspicion testing, supervisory monitoring, and disciplinary policies.

The Policy Solution: HB797



Protects Lawful Medical Patients: Ensures firefighters using off-duty medical cannabis are not terminated solely for metabolites.

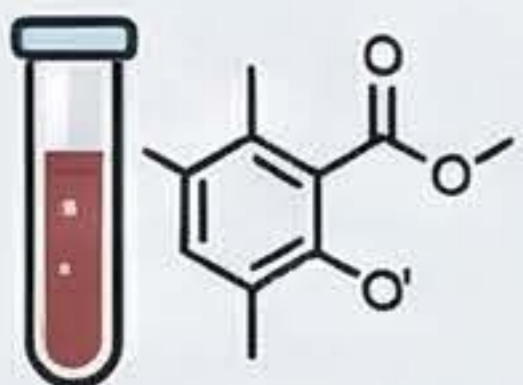


Prioritizes Career Retention: Prevents loss of experienced personnel by allowing treatment without risking employment.



Promotes Safer Treatment Options: Aims to reduce reliance on high-risk opioids and benzodiazepines for long-term health.

The Science of Drug Testing vs. Impairment



Metabolites Are Not Impairment

Tests detect chemical byproducts (metabolites) for days or weeks, not real-time psychoactive impairment.



Alcohol
(Impairment)

HOURS
(Clear System)

Alcohol clears in hours; cannabis metabolites remain long after effects wear off.



Cannabis
(Metabolites)

DAYS/WEEKS
(Remain Detectable)



Reliance on Behavioral Indicators

Departments already rely on supervisor observation and fitness-for-duty evaluations.



MYTH

Myth: Firefighters would be allowed to work "high."



FACT

Fact: HB797 maintains strict prohibitions on on-duty impairment; it only protects off-duty, lawful medical use.

MYTH

Myth: Drug tests prove current impairment.

FACT

Fact: Most tests only prove past exposure (metabolites), not current unfitness for duty.