

HCS HBs 559 & 484 -- FIRST RESPONDERS

SPONSOR: Schroer

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Public Safety by a vote of 10 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 559.

This bill provides that if, preceding the date of injury or death, an employee who is on active duty as a first responder is diagnosed with a mental impairment and such person was not previously diagnosed with such an impairment, the impairment shall presumptively be considered an occupational disease and shall be presumed to have arisen out of and in the course of employment. This presumption may be rebutted by the employer or insurer. One or more compensable mental impairment claim arising out of a single accident shall constitute a single injury. Furthermore, a mental impairment shall not be considered an occupational disease if it results from a disciplinary action, work evaluation, job transfer, layoff, demotion, promotion, termination, retirement, or similar action taken in good faith by the employer.

This bill is the same as HB No. 1965 (2020).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that officers can use PTSD as a presumptive occupational disease for the purpose of workers' compensation. It is meant to help first responders who, no matter what situation, witness something traumatic on the scene, and the intent is to get officers who respond to certain calls the help and support they need. In the past, officers have been told to "suck it up" and that it is part of the job, but it has become clear that that was the wrong attitude.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Schroer; Missouri 911 Directors Association; Missouri Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association; Missouri Chapter of The Association of Public Safety Communications Officials; Missouri Fraternal Order of Police; St. Louis Police Officers Association; Kansas City Fraternal Order of Police; Mark Habbas, Missouri State Council of Fire Fighters; and Missouri Ambulance Association.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill submitted written testimony, which can be found online.

Testifying against the bill were Arnie Dienoff; and Mo Self Insurers Association.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.