

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. House Bill 1459

PRINTER NO. 3945

AMOUNT

\$250,000

FUND

Emergency Medical Services Operating Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

May 14, 2019

PRIME SPONSOR

Representative Schlossberg

DESCRIPTION

House Bill 1459 amends Title 35 (Health and Safety) to create a mental wellness and stress management program for emergency responders.

This bill provides definitions for the following terms:

- Cooperating Officials and Agencies;
- Corrections Officer;
- Critical Incident;
- Department (Health);
- Emergency Responder;
- Mental Wellness and Stress Management Protocol;
- Peace Officer;
- Peer-to-Peer Support Program;
- Posttraumatic Stress Injury;
- Public Agency; and
- Trained Peer Support Provider.

The legislation requires the Secretary of Health (secretary), in cooperation with operating officials and agencies, to develop a mental wellness and stress management protocol for first responders who suffer or may have suffered from a posttraumatic stress or traumatic brain injury as a result of being exposed to critical incidents in their role as first responders. The secretary is also required to establish at least one peer-to-peer support service program in each of the department's regional or district offices.

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The program shall provide support for mental health issues, alcohol, substance abuse or chemical dependence, sexual abuse trauma, workplace abuse, co-occurring disorders and any other support services the department deems necessary. All emergency first responders shall have access to the program. The department shall also develop guidelines for recruitment and training of entities capable to provide the peer-to-peer support, which will include minimum qualifications to be a provider. The department must also establish a credentialing requirement and a certificate evidencing a provider’s qualifications.

House Bill 1459 requires the department to establish a toll-free helpline to respond to calls from emergency responders. All sites where emergency responders serve will be required to post signs that include the toll-free helpline. The number shall also be posted on the department’s website and the website of any cooperating officials and agencies.

The bill requires the establishment of the Statewide Critical Incident Stress Management Program to identify the emotional impact that incidents have on emergency responders. The department is also required to develop a trauma and suicide awareness and impact training program. The department may contract with a third-party provider to provide the training. The training shall be required as part of the initial and continuing education of emergency responders. The department and cooperating officials and agencies shall provide the contact information of entities offering support services.

The legislation prohibits the disclosure of any information regarding a responder without their consent, except in cases where a trained support provider believes a clear and present danger to the responder or other individuals exists.

The bill allows the department to use no more than \$250,000 from the Catastrophic Medical and Rehabilitation Fund for the victims of trauma.

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 1459 allows for the expenditure of \$250,000 from the money allocated to the Catastrophic Medical and Rehabilitation Fund. The fund receives its revenue from a 25% allocation of fines deposited into the Emergency Medical Services Operating Fund. Fines are collected from a \$10 fine levied on all moving traffic violations and a \$25 fee on persons admitted to programs for Accelerated Rehabilitation Disposition (ARD) related to driving under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The following chart shows the total revenues transferred to the fund for each of the last five fiscal years:

| Catastrophic Medical and Rehabilitation Fund | |
|--|--------------|
| Fiscal Year | Allocation |
| 2015 | \$ 4,800,000 |
| 2016 | \$ 4,650,000 |
| 2017 | \$ 4,500,000 |
| 2018 | \$ 4,500,000 |
| 2019 | \$ 4,300,000 |

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The department has preliminarily determined that implementing the provisions of this legislation could require an additional employee and operating costs totaling \$439,000 in year one and \$382,000 in year two. The difference between the actual cost and the allowable expenditure of \$250,000 will be accommodated within the department's current appropriation levels.

Please note, financial reporting for the Catastrophic Medical and Rehabilitation Fund is presented through the Emergency Medical Services Operating Fund.