



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Duckworth:

This letter presents the views of the Department of Justice (“Department”) on S. 3635 and H.R. 6943, the “Public Safety Officer Support Act of 2022,” (“the PSO Support Act” or “Act”), which are substantially identical bills introduced in both chambers, intended to expand coverage of Public Safety Officer Benefits to include officers who are permanently disabled due to post-traumatic stress disorder and related mental health disorders and/or who die by suicide as a result of exposure to traumatic events they encounter while on duty. The Department strongly supports both S. 3635 and H.R. 6943.

Public safety officers are routinely called on to respond to traumatic situations. Regularly, their work puts officers across the country at risk of experiencing harm, serious injury, and cumulative and acute trauma. The PSO Support Act would amend Title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to extend benefits to officers suffering from severe mental health injuries. The Department feels strongly that, in providing these benefits, it is imperative that we treat mental illness with parity to physical injuries sustained in the line of duty.

Importantly, the PSO Support Act of 2022 builds on the existing good work of the Department to provide resources to families of fallen officers and officers who have been permanently disabled as a result of a line of duty injury. Since 1976, the PSOB Office has provided nearly \$2 billion in assistance to the survivors of law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders whose death (or catastrophic injury) was the direct and proximate result of an injury sustained in the line of duty. Each year, the PSOB Office reviews over 1,000 claims and works diligently to make a final determination on each claim. It is a unique effort of the Department to work with state, local, federal, and tribal public safety agencies to ensure that the Department can provide death, disability, and/or educational benefits to families of injured law enforcement officers, and one the Department is honored to do.

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
Page Two

Lastly, the PSO Support Act complements bi-partisan legislation that President Biden signed as P.L. 117-61, the “*Protecting America’s First Responders Act of 2021*,” on November 18, 2021. The Department has already made strides to broaden PSOB coverage for officers and their families because that law, among other things, expanded eligible officers for coverage purposes, increased the number of benefits, and extended the period during which public safety officers who die, or become injured, as a result of Covid-19 are eligible.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views. We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

**PETER
HYUN**



Digitally signed by
PETER HYUN
Date: 2022.06.08
11:06:42 -04'00'

Peter S. Hyun
Acting Assistant Attorney General