



May 6, 2022

To the Honorable City Council President, Nick Mosby
and Members of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall, 100 N. Holliday Street, Room 409
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

**Re: CC Bill 22-0091R – Informational Hearing – The Effects of Post-Traumatic
Stress Disorder on First Responders**

Dear President and City Council Members,

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) has reviewed City Council Bill 22-0091R. For the purpose of inviting the Commissioner of the Baltimore City Police Department, the Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department, the Baltimore City Sheriff, the Chief of the Baltimore City School Police, the Director of the Office of Emergency Management, the Chief of the Baltimore City Environmental Police, and the Director of the Department of Human Resources to appear before the Baltimore City Council to discuss how post-traumatic stress symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), compassion fatigue, and burnout affect first responders and to inform the Council on intervention programs that are currently in place to provide City employees with relief from trauma and burnout.

DHR has reviewed the above-referenced bill and supports the legislation. There are several factors that lead to post-traumatic stress disorder and related issues for first responders. Those factors include: having a job that exposes them to traumatic events, experiencing intense trauma, having feelings of helplessness or fear; and seeing people get killed or hurt¹. All of these instances are issues that first responders face on their jobs every day. To that end, there should be mechanisms to assist employees in the management of these issues.

The City's current Employee Assistance Program ("EAP") in DHR provides assistance to employees for a variety of personal and employment-related issues. While stress management is a part of their services, the EAP does not provide assistance for post-traumatic stress symptoms, PTSD, compassion fatigue, or burnout to first responders. The services provided by EAP are available to 911 Operators, outreach workers, and employees working in vulnerable, at-risk City neighborhoods. However, these services are short-term (4-6 sessions only), which means there is

¹ Hunter, J. (2019, April 25). *First Responders and PTSD: Causes and coping*. Armor Up. Retrieved April 21, 2022, from <https://armorupnow.org/2018/06/12/first-responders-and-ptsd-causes-and-coping>

no long-term therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder for these employees. Instead, EAP connects affected employees to an appropriate therapist who is trained in trauma.

Stress and trauma-related services for police officers, fire officers, and firefighters are provided through each memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the employee organizations that govern those employees. Each provides a comparable stress management program for its employees. Specifically, Fire Officers (Local 964) provides short-term psychiatric and psychological care for their members. The Fraternal Order of Police offers a stress management program providing services related thereto at no or nominal cost for employees and family members affected by the employees' job-related stress problems. Finally, the Fire Fighters (Local 734) has the MIEMSS (Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems) protocol (Critical Incident Stress Development Program) to deal with employees' stress resulting from critical incidents and work-related fatalities. These programs attempt to meet the stress-related needs of these employees. These programs are designed specifically to meet the needs of those members. Additionally, these programs were bargained for and agreed upon by the representatives of the affected populations.

Mitigation of stress-related conditions such as PTSD, compassion fatigue, and burnout is necessary for employees to continue providing quality services to the citizens and City they serve. The Department of Human Resources supports best practices regarding employee wellness and programs to support their continued mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

For additional questions or concerns, contact me at Quinton.Herbert@baltimorecity.gov or by phone at 410-396-1563.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Quinton M. Herbert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "H" at the end.

Quinton M. Herbert, JD

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 22-0091R
(First Reader)

Introduced by: Councilmembers McCray, Ramos, Middleton, Bullock, Torrence

Introduced and read first time: February 22, 2022

Assigned to: Health, Environment, and Technology Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Department of Finance, Department of Health, Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Fire Department, Baltimore City Sheriff's Office, Baltimore City Public School System, Department of Public Works, Office of Emergency Management, Department of Human Resources

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – The Effects of Post-Traumatic Stress**
3 **Disorder on First Responders**

4 FOR the purpose of inviting the Commissioner of the Baltimore City Police Department, the
5 Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department, the Baltimore City Sheriff, the Chief of the
6 Baltimore City School Police, the Director of the Office of Emergency Management, the
7 Chief of the Baltimore City Environmental Police, and the Director of the Department of
8 Human Resources to appear before the Baltimore City Council to discuss how post-traumatic
9 stress symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), compassion fatigue, and burnout
10 effect first responders and to inform the Council on intervention programs that are currently
11 in place to provide City employees with relief from trauma and burnout.

12 **Recitals**

13 Emergency medical services personnel, firefighters, and police officers face unprecedented
14 challenges in the line of duty. Exposure to drug overdoses, vehicle collisions, homicides,
15 suicides, and violent crime can take an emotional toll on a first responder. Because emergency
16 response personnel witness such a high number of serious injuries and deaths, Baltimore City
17 needs to spotlight the mental health of its first responders. A staggering 88% of emergency
18 workers have experienced at least 1 traumatic event while working, and 10 to 14% have been
19 diagnosed with PTSD.

20 Some first responders do not have access to the resources they need to address traumatic
21 events. Many emergency workers continue to witness the ills of society, dealing with trauma
22 through dialogue with colleagues, who are often taxed themselves. While these conversations
23 provide a helpful way for individuals to communicate about their experiences with a sympathetic
24 peer, those who need help from a professional often do not have many options due to tight
25 budgets and a lack of resources provided by their organizations. As a result, some individuals
26 turn to negative ways to address trauma, including substance abuse and suicide.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

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1 According to the Ruderman Family Foundation in a report on first responders and mental
2 health, first responders are more likely to die from suicide than in the line of duty. PTSD and
3 depression stemming from exposure to trauma were significant factors contributing to this high
4 rate of suicide. One survey of first responders found that 6.6% had attempted suicide. While
5 most mental health professionals believe suicide attempts by first responders are under reported
6 due to stigma, this percentage is more than 10 times the rate of attempted suicides reported by the
7 general population.

8 To prevent the worst outcomes associated with PTSD in first responders and to give our
9 emergency professionals the support and resources they require, the City Council would like to
10 be informed about the factors that lead to PTSD, the types of intervention programs that are
11 already available or are able to be provided to employees witnessing trauma on the job, and the
12 steps agencies are taking to alleviate employees' exposure to trauma, including rotating
13 individuals in assignments where they are most like to experience continuous traumatic stress.

14 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
15 Baltimore City Council invites the Commissioner of the Baltimore City Police Department, the
16 Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department, the Baltimore City Sheriff, the Chief of the
17 Baltimore City School Police, the Director of the Office of Emergency Management, the Chief of
18 the Baltimore City Environmental Police, and the Director of the Department of Human
19 Resources to appear before the Baltimore City Council to discuss how post-traumatic stress
20 symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), compassion fatigue, and burnout effect first
21 responders and to inform the Council on intervention programs that are currently in place to
22 provide City employees with relief from trauma and burnout.

23 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Commissioner
24 of the Baltimore City Police Department, the Chief of the Baltimore City Fire Department, the
25 Baltimore City Sheriff, the Chief of the Baltimore City School Police, the Director of the Office
26 of Emergency Management, the Chief of the Baltimore City Environmental Police, the Director
27 of the Department of Human Resources and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the Baltimore
28 City Council.