

December 6, 2023

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Schumer, Leader Jeffries, and Leader McConnell:

The undersigned organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates, and other stakeholders write today to express support for the bipartisan, bicameral *DHS Suicide Prevention and Resiliency for Law Enforcement Act* (H.R. 2577/S. 1137). We urge the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate to support the passage of this important legislation, which the House Homeland Security Committee and Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee advanced on a bipartisan basis earlier this year. It is critical that Congress pass this important legislation to enable the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to provide officers and agents with mental health resources, reduce stigma, and help prevent suicide.

First responders are vulnerable to acute occupational hazards and stressors on the job, including traumatic events, which can in turn increase risk for suicidal behavior or exacerbate existing risk for suicide related to other factors. Research highlights the link between suicide among first responders and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Post Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSD/PTSI). From 2007 to 2022, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) lost 149 people to suicide and in 2022, U.S. CBP reported 15 suicides—the most since 2007, the year it started tracking such deaths.¹

The *DHS Suicide Prevention and Resiliency for Law Enforcement Act* establishes a mental health and wellness program for the DHS, the largest federal law enforcement agency with approximately 80,000 officers across nine agencies and officers. The bill requires annual interactive virtual suicide awareness and law enforcement resiliency as well as suicide prevention and resiliency support and training for families of law enforcement agents and officers. The bill also helps to promote a culture that reduces the stigma of seeking help by revising policies that ensure that the workforce can access mental health resources and improving access to peer supports.

We look forward to working with you to pass the *DHS Suicide Prevention and Resiliency for Law Enforcement Act*. For more information, please contact Emily Feltren, Senior Director of Federal Policy and Advocacy at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention at efeltren@afsp.org.

Sincerely,

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

¹ U.S. House Report 118-237, <https://www.congress.gov/118/crpt/hrpt237/CRPT-118hrpt237.pdf>.

American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association Services
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Centerstone
Clinical Social Work Association
Employees Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA)
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Inseparable
Mental Health America
NACBHDD - National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
NARMH - National Association of Rural Mental Health
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Federation of Families
Psychotherapy Action Network
RI International
The Kennedy Forum
Vibrant Emotional Health