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Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, and Honorable Members of this Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Chris Tracy and I'm here as a Vice President with the Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut, Assistant Chief of Training for the Fairfield Fire Department, and Director of the Fairfield Regional Fire School to speak in favor of Senate Bill 823, an Act Concerning Severe Mental or Emotional Impairment and Workers' Compensation Coverage.

As you know, first responders come to work every day and night expecting to deal with emergencies of every shape and size, from the sweeping impact of natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods and blizzards to the intimate personal tragedies that take place in homes across the state every hour of the day and night. We're used to going to burning buildings as everyone else is running out, and never shirk at the responsibility of tending to patients and occupants in their most vulnerable moments.

What we're not accustomed to – what no one should ever become accustomed to – is walking into a school full of children, or a train full of passengers, or a building full of civilians, or a neighborhood full of residents “whose death or maiming was caused by an intentional act of violence by another human being.” Yet that's exactly what's happened in Newtown, Garden City, Lower Manhattan, and Webster, New York in recent years.

Those first responders and others like them across this state were in those places witnessing those events as a direct result of their employment, and yet as a result of reforms made to Workers Compensation in 1993 their mental

health and post-traumatic stress in the aftermath of these events is no longer recognized as a work related injury. That was not part of their training, nor was it something they could or should have expected when they came to work that day... yet they responded professionally and saved many others as a result of their actions.

Is anyone in this building ready to respond as a requirement of their job to such an event? Can anyone here say that the mental health care required by those who respond in the aftermath of such an event should not be covered by Workers Compensation? And if we can all agree that the natural response to witnessing and mitigating these horrors may result in post-traumatic stress disorder requiring treatment, is there any reason not to vote in favor of this bill?

I'm here today to ask you to protect my brother and sister fire fighters and police officers and medical responders by providing them the knowledge that their care and treatment in the aftermath of events such as those we've seen in recent months will be covered by Workers Compensation – I'm here asking you to vote in favor of SB 823.