

Insurance and Real Estate Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1015

AN ACT PROHIBITING LIFE INSURANCE COMPANIES FROM
DISCRIMINATING AGAINST FIRST RESPONDERS DIAGNOSED WITH POST-

Title: TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

Vote Date: 3/14/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/16/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Insurance and Real Estate Committee

Rep. Tom Delnicki, 14th Dist.

Sen. Heather Somers, 18th Dist.

Rep. Greg Howard, 43rd Dist.

Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.

Rep. Tammy Nuccio, 53rd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Due to the nature of their career, first responders are regularly exposed to traumatic experiences that can lead to one developing PTSD. As this condition can significantly impact an individual's life expectancy, it undoubtedly receives serious consideration when an afflicted person applies for a life insurance policy. The insurers typically require applicants to disclose if they have been denied life insurance in the past.

Several interest groups and first responders diagnosed with PTSD contacted members of the General Assembly with claims that they have never once been approved for a life insurance policy. They believe that the industry is categorically denying life insurance to first responders with PTSD treatment on their records and the problem is compounding with every subsequent denial.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

AFL-CIO Connecticut, President, Ed Hawthorne: supports this bill because PTSD has "a significant impact on the mental and behavior health of our workforce" and should be treated like a bodily injury with regard to "identification, prevention, and treatment." He believes that individuals with PTSD are being discriminated against by insurers and, consequently, a greater number of afflicted patients are refusing to seek proper treatment to keep a diagnosis off their records.

Council 4 American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, Legislative Director, Brian Anderson: supports this bill because "the practice of denying law enforcement officers and other first responders. . . life insurance because they have sought PTSD treatment is just wrong." He discussed previous legislation passed by the General Assembly requiring mid-career mental health evaluations for law enforcement, which is resulting in an increase in diagnoses. He referenced the in-person testimony of "PTSD treatment expert" Jim Rascati, who believes that the treatment is "highly effective" and allows first responders to return to work in a reasonable timeframe. He further testified that the responders most at risk for suicide are not those seeking or receiving treatment, but those who are forgoing it because of the stigma.

National Alliance on Mental Illness Connecticut, Public Policy and Affiliates Relations Manger, Thomas Burr: supports this bill because individuals afflicted with mental health conditions "can count on being routinely turned down when trying to acquire any sort of life insurance policy." He believes that denying such applicants is discrimination and these individuals should be allowed the "reasonable protections" they are willing to pay for. He further proposes that the bill be amended to "include everyone with a mental health diagnosis," not just first responders.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

American Council of Life Insurers, Regional Vice President, State Relations, Jill Rickard and Insurance Association of Connecticut, President, Eric George: filed joint opposition against this bill, noting insurers' underwriting practices are already governed by laws preventing "unfair trade practices." While insurers are legally required to provide equal pricing to individuals in the same risk pool, each provider can develop a unique process for evaluating the risk an applicant poses. This holistic review accounts for treatment history, severity, and "improvement and/or stability of a condition"; it is atypical for a determination to be made off a single factor.

Reported by: Sean Chilson

Date: 3/20/2023