

The Connecticut General Assembly



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STATE REP. GARY TURCO TOUTS HOUSE PASSAGE OF HB 5420

Bill ensures law enforcement officers can focus on mental health without worrying about job loss or potential retribution

HARTFORD — **State Rep. Gary Turco (D-Newington)**, a member of the Public Safety and Security Committee in the General Assembly, touted the passage of [HB 5420](#) by the House of Representatives last week, which makes several changes affecting law enforcement and related agencies regarding mental health for both police officers and those with whom they interact on the job.

"Men and women in uniform face increased stress, PTSD, depression, and higher rates of suicide than those they are sworn to protect," said **Rep. Turco**. "If an officer faces a mental health assessment and requires treatment, they should be able to focus on recovery and not have to worry about their job protection or potential retribution. By advancing this bill, the House acted to ensure the necessary protections so that officers could focus on their mental health."

"I requested to be on the Public Safety and Security Committee and helped the bill through the committee process," continued **Rep. Turco**. "I wanted to work closely with state and local law enforcement since first responders have been on the front line since day one of the pandemic, and it has been a tough time combating issues of crime and safety, along with their personal physical and mental health due to the many consequences of COVID-19. They need our support; I wanted to help, and this bill goes a long way toward helping them."

The bill:

- Extends existing employment protections to certain police officers who seek or receive mental health care services after undergoing a required behavioral health assessment
- Eliminates police basic and review training on handling incidents involving a person affected with a severe mental illness and replaces it with training on interacting with people who have mental or physical disabilities or are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf and blind
- Sets up a task force to study law enforcement officers' mental health needs
- Requires UConn's Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, in consultation with the United Way of Connecticut, to submit a report by January 1, 2023, to the Public Safety and Security Committee that includes a study of a representative sample of 911 calls and analyzes the percentage of the calls that would be more appropriately directed to the 2-1-1 Infoline program, which the United Way of Connecticut operates

- Requires a report on the use of online or remote technology by POST for police officer training after initial certification
- Requires the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to report to the legislature about the Community and Law Enforcement for Addiction Recovery Project's status

HB 5420, which passed the House by a 145-0 vote, is now under consideration by the Senate.

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