

HB536 INTRODUCED



1 HB536
2 HGWW266-1
3 By Representatives Tillman, Treadaway
4 RFD: Ways and Means General Fund
5 First Read: 08-Apr-25



SYNOPSIS:

Existing law currently provides for peer support members to help law enforcement officers in need of emotional and moral support caused by job-related stress or a particular incident in the line of duty.

This bill would require the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency to set up a program to educate and provide resources to law enforcement officers who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), in cooperation with county and municipal law enforcement agencies.

This bill would also require law enforcement agencies and departments to provide financial assistance to officers to meet cost-sharing obligations for insurance benefits for PTSD treatment, to reimburse officers for mileage for traveling to treatment appointments, and paid leave for time off work for PTSD treatment.

A BILL

TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

Relating to law enforcement officers; to require the



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Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency to establish a program to educate law enforcement officers about post-traumatic stress syndrome; to provide for cooperation between ALEA and local law enforcement agencies; and to require law enforcement agencies to provide certain benefits to officers with PTSD.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. (a) For the purposes of this section the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) ALEA. The Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency.

(2) EMPLOYER. The state, a department or agency thereof, a county or municipality, or other political subdivision that employs law enforcement officers.

(3) LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER. A law enforcement officer who is certified by the Alabama Peace Officers' Standards and Training Commission and who is employed by the state, a county, or municipality.

(4) POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD). A mental health condition that meets the diagnostic criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR), published by the American Psychiatric Association.

(5) QUALIFYING EVENT. An isolated and extraordinarily traumatic event involving an officer acting within the line and scope of duty and that includes the officer satisfying either of the following:

a. Witnessing or being directly engaged in actions resulting in the death of an individual on the scene of the event.



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b. Witnessing or being directly engaged in actions, during or immediately after an event, which result in an injury of such a severe nature that it leads directly to the death of an individual due to the injury on the way to, or no more than 48 hours after, reaching a hospital for treatment.

(6) QUALIFYING TREATING PHYSICIAN. A licensed clinical psychologist or board certified psychiatrist licensed to practice in this state and with experience diagnosing PTSD, including the identification of malingering PTSD, and treating patients with evidenced-based therapies.

(7) TREATMENT. The term includes evidence-based therapies recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, including cognitive behavioral conjoint therapy, cognitive processing therapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, and prolonged exposure, and other talk therapy, alone or in combination with prescription drugs.

Section 2. There is established a program to treat law enforcement officers in the State of Alabama for post-traumatic stress disorder, to be comprised of the following participants:

(1) The Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency, as further described in Section 3.

(2) State departments or agencies, counties, and municipalities that employ law enforcement officers, as described in Sections 4 through 6.

Section 3. (a) The Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency shall do all of the following:

(1) Require, as a precondition for certification as a



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peer support member as described in Section 36-21-14, Code of Alabama 1975, that an applicant complete an introductory training course on PTSD and the recognition of its symptoms.

(2) Develop and update a roster of qualifying treating physicians who are located throughout the State of Alabama.

(3) Designate an employee with personal experience or contact with PTSD to be a permanent resource officer and liaison to local law enforcement agencies to respond to inquiries about PTSD resources and treatment and to conduct on-site presentations or seminars on PTSD.

(4) Develop written materials to educate officers on PTSD, which shall:

a. Include information on symptoms, coping methods, and treatment options;

b. Be under periodic review by mental health professionals to ensure that they contain current and accurate information substantiated by peer-reviewed literature; and

c. Made available in printed form for distribution and as a resource link accessible on the ALEA website.

(b) In the implementation and development of the measures described in subsection (a), ALEA shall receive upon request the assistance, including the expertise, of the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

Section 4. An employer shall do all of the following:

(1) If the employer provides or makes available health care insurance to law enforcement officers, the employer shall review the health benefit plan for compliance with the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act to ensure that



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113 coverage exists to pay claims or reimbursement for treatment
114 for PTSD.

115 (2) The employer shall use the resources developed
116 under the auspices of ALEA as provided in Section 3 of this
117 act, including, at a minimum, compulsory education to law
118 enforcement officers on recognizing PTSD.

119 (3) Provide the benefits described in Section 5.

120 Section 5. (a) To claim benefits under this section, a
121 law enforcement officer shall satisfy all of the following:

122 (1) Experience a qualifying event during the 12-month
123 period immediately preceding the date of the first claim for
124 benefits.

125 (2) Agree in writing that the employer is not liable
126 under Chapter 5, Title 25, Code of Alabama 1975, to the law
127 enforcement officer who elects to receive benefits under this
128 act.

129 (3) Participate in an applicable peer support event,
130 conducted by a certified peer support member where the law
131 enforcement officer receives a debriefing, defusing, or
132 coaching session in accordance with Section 36-21-14, Code of
133 Alabama 1975.

134 (4) Receive certification from a qualified treating
135 physician containing both of the following:

136 a. That the law enforcement officer has been diagnosed
137 with PTSD and that the PTSD resulted solely from his or her
138 involvement in a qualifying event that occurred in the line
139 and course of his or her duties as a law enforcement officer.

140 b. That the treatment, which may include evidence-based



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therapies, counseling, or prescription drugs, is medically necessary.

(5) Authorize the insurer, if applicable, to communicate with the qualified treating physician for the limited and sole purpose of confirming PTSD treatment to the extent necessary to verify claims for benefits under this section.

(b) An employer shall reimburse a law enforcement officer for any copayment, coinsurance, or deductible incurred by the officer in receiving treatment for PTSD that is otherwise covered by the law enforcement officer's health insurance, not to exceed fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) during his or her lifetime.

(c) (1) A law enforcement officer shall be reimbursed for travel for PTSD treatment.

(2) The reimbursement shall be per mile for a round trip at the current standard mileage rate set by the Internal Revenue Service for receiving medical care for income tax deduction if the travel meets all of the following conditions:

a. The purpose is to visit a qualified treating physician for PTSD treatment.

b. The mileage, one way, between the law enforcement officer's residence and the qualified treating physician is at least 25 miles.

c. The travel is not outside the State of Alabama.

Section 6. (a) An employer shall provide a law enforcement officer up to an additional 80 working hours of paid leave to undergo treatment for PTSD.



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(b) Any leave taken to undergo treatment for PTSD shall be without any loss of pay and shall be in addition to all types of leave otherwise applicable under the employer's policies, including sick leave, personal leave, and annual vacation.

(c) Any leave taken to undergo treatment for PTSD shall not be used by the employer as a factor in any performance evaluation given to the law enforcement officer or any disciplinary action required under the employer's policies to be administered to the officer.

(d) The benefits provided pursuant to this section are independent of any coverage for PTSD treatment available to a law enforcement officer under employer-sponsored health insurance or health insurance obtained by the law enforcement officer from any other source, and eligibility is governed solely by the terms of this section.

(e) An employer is authorized to seek and obtain secondary, or gap, insurance to pay for the benefits provided under this section.

(f) In the event a law enforcement officer is employed by more than one employer simultaneously, the primary employer shall be responsible for the benefits provided under this section. The primary employer shall be identified as the employer that provides primary health insurance benefits to the law enforcement officer.

(g) A law enforcement officer is no longer entitled to the benefits under this section if he or she resigns, is terminated, or retires.



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197 (h) If a law enforcement officer transfers to a
198 different employer, the new employer shall not be required to
199 pay any premium for any benefits paid for by insurance under
200 this section until the current calendar year's coverage
201 expires with the previous employer.

202 Section 7. The benefits and reimbursement provided
203 under Section 6 of this act shall not apply to PTSD resulting
204 from events occurring prior to October 1, 2025.

205 Section 8. This act shall become effective on October
206 1, 2025.