
SENATE BILL 6570

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2020 Regular Session

By Senators King, Saldaña, Wagoner, Lovelett, and Wilson, C.

Read first time 01/23/20. Referred to Committee on Health & Long Term Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to law enforcement officer mental health and
2 wellness; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that law
5 enforcement officers respond to and witness some of the most tragic
6 events that happen in our communities. On-the-job stress can have a
7 significant impact on their physical and mental well-being and can
8 accumulate over the course of a career.

9 (2) Research indicates that law enforcement officers experience
10 key risk factors for suicides, including exposure to trauma, alcohol
11 use, availability of firearms, and the strains of shift work.
12 Compared to the general population, law enforcement officers report
13 much higher rates of depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and
14 other anxiety-related mental health conditions. These health
15 conditions have a significant impact on the officers and their
16 families.

17 (3) A 2019 report from the United States department of justice
18 found that, nationally, law enforcement suicides are 28.2 per one
19 hundred thousand for men and 12.2 per one hundred thousand for women.
20 A 2018 report by the Ruderman family foundation found that law

1 enforcement officers are one and one-half times more likely to commit
2 suicide than the general population.

3 (4) Despite these significant risk factors, there is no central
4 repository of comprehensive data regarding law enforcement officer
5 suicides. As a result, there are no comprehensive tools available to
6 law enforcement agencies to develop effective suicide prevention
7 strategies, or to know whether those strategies are making a
8 difference.

9 (5) Although Washington state has conducted significant work
10 towards suicide prevention more broadly, there is not a current
11 statewide program that provides comprehensive, evidence-based mental
12 health and suicide prevention resources for law enforcement and their
13 families.

14 (6) The legislature finds that there is an urgent need to develop
15 resources and interventions specifically targeted at helping law
16 enforcement and their family members manage their behavioral health
17 needs.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1)(a) The department of health shall
19 convene a task force on law enforcement officer mental health and
20 wellness in Washington state with members as provided in this
21 subsection:

- 22 (i) The secretary of health, or the secretary's designee;
- 23 (ii) The chief of the Washington state patrol, or the chief's
24 designee;
- 25 (iii) The secretary of the department of corrections, or the
26 secretary's designee;
- 27 (iv) A representative from the University of Washington's
28 forefront suicide prevention program;
- 29 (v) The executive director of the criminal justice training
30 commission, or the director's designee;
- 31 (vi) One representative each from:
 - 32 (A) The Washington council of police and sheriffs;
 - 33 (B) The Washington state fraternal order of police;
 - 34 (C) The council of metropolitan police and sheriffs;
 - 35 (D) The Washington state patrol troopers association;
 - 36 (E) The Washington state patrol lieutenants and captains
37 association;
 - 38 (F) Tribal law enforcement;
 - 39 (G) The Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs;

1 (H) An association representing community behavioral health
2 agencies;

3 (I) An association representing mental health providers; and

4 (J) An association representing substance use disorder treatment
5 providers.

6 (b) The representative from the department of health shall serve
7 as the chair of the task force.

8 (c) At a minimum, the task force shall meet quarterly.

9 (2) The task force shall review the following issues and
10 information:

11 (a) Data related to the behavioral health status of law
12 enforcement officers, including suicide rates, substance abuse rates,
13 posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, availability of behavioral
14 health services, and utilization of behavioral health services;

15 (b) Factors unique to the law enforcement community that affect
16 the behavioral health of persons working in law enforcement,
17 including factors affecting suicide rates;

18 (c) Components that should be addressed in the behavioral health
19 and suicide prevention pilot program established in section 3 of this
20 act, including consideration of components that relate to similar
21 programs funded or partially funded by the bureau of justice
22 assistance and the national institute of justice;

23 (d) The recommendations of the Washington state department of
24 health's suicide prevention plan and the applicability of the plan's
25 recommendations to law enforcement mental health issues;

26 (e) The recommendations of the United States department of
27 justice 2019 report to congress on law enforcement mental health and
28 wellness; and

29 (f) Options to improve the behavioral health status of and reduce
30 prevalent mental health issues and the suicide risk among law
31 enforcement officers and their families.

32 (3) Staff support for the task force shall be provided by the
33 department of health.

34 (4) The task force shall report its findings and recommendations
35 to the governor and relevant committees of the legislature by
36 December 1, 2021, including a summary of:

37 (a) The data to be reviewed described in subsection (2) of this
38 section;

39 (b) The results of the pilot projects funded by this act and
40 recommendations regarding the continuation of those programs;

1 (c) The best practices and policies for providing mental health
2 services and preventing law enforcement suicides; and

3 (d) Recommendations on resources and technical assistance to
4 support law enforcement agencies in preventing law enforcement
5 suicides.

6 (5) This section expires July 1, 2022.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) Subject to the availability of amounts
8 appropriated for this specific purpose not to exceed three hundred
9 thousand dollars per fiscal year, the Washington association of
10 sheriffs and police chiefs shall establish three pilot projects to
11 support behavioral health improvement and suicide prevention efforts
12 for law enforcement officers.

13 (2) The Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs
14 shall establish a competitive grant program to award funding for the
15 three pilot projects by September 1, 2020.

16 (3) Law enforcement associations and agencies are eligible to
17 compete for grant funding.

18 (4) The following programs and activities are eligible for grant
19 funding:

20 (a) Public information and wellness promotion campaigns;

21 (b) Embedded mental health professionals;

22 (c) Peer support programs;

23 (d) Resiliency training programs; and

24 (e) Critical incident stress management programs.

25 (5) Grantees must provide a report to the association on the
26 results of their program by October 1, 2021. The association must
27 provide the information to the officer mental health and wellness
28 task force established in section 2 of this act, for incorporation in
29 the December 1, 2021, report to the governor and relevant committees
30 of the legislature.

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