

March 18, 2019

Senate Committee on Workforce

Re: Support for Senate Bill 507

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lori M. Bryan. I was employed with the Oregon State Police Northern Command Center on December 25, 2016 when I was involved in a critical incident.

On that day, Trooper Nic Cederberg was responding to, and got into a pursuit with a vehicle which was involved in a homicide. After getting pertinent information from the Washington County 9-1-1 about all vehicle information, it was put out over the air.

After a matter of minutes, Trooper Cederberg announced he was in pursuit of that vehicle. After following all Standard Operating Procedures, I cleared the channel and gave updates of all information that was relayed to me from the trooper. They end up at the end of the road when I hear "shots fired, shots fired, I'm being shot at." Then I heard Trooper Cederberg yell, "I've been shot!". I repeated the information and the area in which it looked like his patrol car was and started heading units in that direction. I tried status checks every 5-10 seconds, maybe less, and never got a response from Trooper Cederberg.

Everyone who was on duty that night did all that they could with answering phone calls, calling other 9-1-1 centers and other agencies to make them aware of what was going on and to get backup to the troopers location while I concentrated on the units coming up on my radio, giving out his last location and making sure all information was documented in the call. My partner, Sarah Thompson, was on with Washington County 9-1-1 trying to get a status and an update on the trooper. At some point it came over the phone that he had been shot in the head. We could not determine who had been shot in the head. We just knew that a trooper was down. No one could give us any information to let us know if he was alive or deceased. The on-duty Supervisor and another dispatcher were making calls to patrol supervisors and detectives. This kept me fully focused on the radio and to continue checking the status of the trooper until someone got on scene.

That night was one of the most stressful, and scariest nights of my life. I held it together all while I was in dispatch and did my job as I was trained to do. As to when I left the parking lot, that is a different story.

The tears and sobbing just wouldn't stop. Neither did the shaking or feeling like I was going to vomit. I had to pull over to try and compose myself. When I finally made it home, I was unable to sleep. I kept going through my head, did I do what I was supposed to? Is he going to make it after learning he had been shot 12 times? How is my partner doing? I had my boys with me the next day. I couldn't stop crying or holding and hugging them. I called my union president, Mark Banks, to let him know that I was unable to work for the next couple of days. He made the arrangements for me to stay home and even came down to check on me.

After having several days off, I was still unable to sleep, had horrible nightmares, and severe migraines. The stress was so bad it was hard to concentrate, and I continued to cry whenever I thought about the incident or the status of Trooper Cederberg.

I went to the dispatch debriefing along with everyone who was on duty that night. Even though I had been involved in other critical incidents, this is the first time I was ever invited to one of these debriefings. I also went to the debriefing of all who were involved. This helped some but made the stress just as bad because of having to reliving it over and over again.

I did talk to a psychologist who was recommended by the department. One suggestion that she made was to go and visit Trooper Cederberg when it was possible. I did go visit him while he was at the rehabilitation center. This turned out to not be a very good thing. He was in so much pain and we got to talking about the incident and I think it made matters worse for both of us. Having to relive it yet again, caused me to have high anxiety and not be able to sleep.

I tried to go back to work at the dispatch center but ended up dispatching another call regarding another possible shooting suspect in the Springfield Patrol Office area. Again, I had a trooper behind a vehicle that could possibly be the vehicle in question. The trooper did not respond when I did status checks. This raised my anxiety so much that I had to try and slow my breathing down. My partner at that time, told me to try and calm down, I was doing a great job.

The department tried to find me other jobs within the department as a reasonable accommodation. I also had filed a SAIF claim due to not being able to work and having such a rough time with the stress and vicarious trauma in reliving the incident of Trooper Cederberg's shooting.

I was advised of an attorney who could assist me in filing the claim. I went to several psychiatrists that were on the SAIF list. Even though I advised them multiple times about the PTSD from this situation and the anxiety, headaches, not sleeping, it was still up to me to prove that this is what caused my condition.

After being on short-term disability and on SAIF for a couple months, my claim was denied. So, it was up to me and my attorney to prove that this really exists and is not something that dispatchers can have.

I am on a voluntary medical separation from Oregon State Police because I continue to get migraines on almost a daily basis. I still suffer from anxiety and nightmares.

I have since moved back to my hometown and work a part-time job. I still wish I was able to work for Oregon State Police as they are my second family. I have worked for them since November 1991 both full-time and part-time in dispatch.

I am writing this to let you know that dispatchers need to be protected and taken care of just as the troopers on the road are. We are their life-line when they need help and have no outlet when these occur. We cannot just get up and walk away from our consoles. We continue to do our jobs to make sure we've done all we can. I don't feel that a dispatcher who has gone through critical situations should have to prove that they are going through a rough time. Not everyone handles situations the same way therefore, they should be treated as a member of the department and not as just a dispatcher.

Sincerely,

*Lori M. Bryan*