



OREGON COMBINED CHAPTERS OF:
The Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO)
& National Emergency Number Association (NENA)
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2023
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Testimony in Support of HB 3426
Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management,
Federal and World Affairs
May 4, 2023

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Our Vision: *"Embrace a vibrant and growing organization characterized by member support, professional development and stakeholder education."*

The Oregon Association of Public Safety Communications Officials and National Emergency Number Association (APCO/NENA) represents the 9-1-1 centers (Primary Public Safety Answering Points, PSAPs) in Oregon.

We support HB 3426 as all-inclusive to all first responders, including not only those who see traumatic incidents and physically provide assistance, but also those who hear the traumatic events over the phone and/or radio. PTSD is commonly recognized in public safety jobs of all types. The most horrific incidents are the ones who stick with all of us in our respective careers and build up over time. One never knows what will bring an incident back that might have occurred 5, 10, 20, 30 or more years ago. Innocent things such as driving by a scene, hearing the same type of call again, news articles on anniversaries of tragic events, or any host of other reminders that the holder of the past will not even know why now they must re-live one of many bad days of their careers.

We all appreciate that the world mostly operates on an 8-5 Monday thru Friday basis, however, our careers do not. If we aren't there working, our co-workers are, it never ends. Many in the various fields of work have tried getting help in the past and have been met with well-intentioned mental health workers who have no idea of the horror or breadth of some of the things we all deal with. Again, they are well-intentioned however they are not always equipped to help with our unique set of circumstances. The last thing any of us who needs help and has the courage to reach out for it need is to explain everything about our career to someone who is then traumatized and unable to help us when we most need them. Any of us who have reached out in the past, can tell you that speaking with someone who understands from the start about our careers and what we go through without explanation, and can just hear what we are dealing with in the moment is of such comfort, and what we all need more of.

We are very appreciative that this bill is all-inclusive and aims to give us the help we need when we identify ourselves as first responders. The easier we can make it for our co-workers on both sides of the radio to get help when they are in need, should give everyone comfort knowing that we have more options than were available before and they are somewhat tailored to our unique needs.

Respectfully,

Tony Collins, APCO Legislative Co-Chair
 Lisa St. Helens, APCO Legislative Co-Chair