



PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS OF VERMONT

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To: Senate Health and Welfare Committee
From: Christopher Dube, President
Re: Input and Support on H.270 - Confidentiality for Peer Support
Date: May 1, 2026

The Professional Firefighters of Vermont are in strong support of H.270 - Confidentiality in Peer Support for Emergency Responders. This bill, if passed, would ensure that any correspondence made by a member seeking these support services would remain confidential. We feel that this is important as we want our members to be assured that information shared would not be used against in their employment. Other States are enacting these protections and Vermont would be inline with them. We feel this is taking a pro-active approach and providing protections before an issue does arise where someone loses their job as a result of seeking support services.

Vermont was the first in the nation to provide presumptive legislation for behavioral health and PTSD to emergency responders. In fact, our legislation was used as templates for numerous other States. This is the next logical step to show that Vermont cares about their responders and supports/ encourages them to seek help if needed. For years our members have been hesitant to seek these services so any potential barriers that are removed will make them feel more secure if seeking help.

The PFFV utilizes a Peer Support Team network where we have members who have gone through the IAFF Peer Support Training and act as a first-line mechanism for members experiencing stress, PTSD or any other mental health type issue. Our team is not there to treat or diagnose, they are there to listen and will provide help as needed, such as assisting with getting more professional help if needed. Members can access the team anytime by calling a toll-free numbers. We have had great success with this system and many members have gotten the help they needed. We have even had members within the State attend in-person programs to help them overcome their issues and return to work after successful treatment.

Any legislation that will help our members overcome any struggles, come back to work and complete a successful career is our ultimate goal. We want to ensure that our members are healthy, both physically and mentally, to server their communities and not hide the stresses of our work.

Thank you for strong support of emergency services workers in the State. Once passed, this bill will go a long way toward helping our members who are or may experience mental health issues. As the demand for our services increases year after year, the stresses also increase dramatically. While we have not placed a high priority on mental health in the past, we are quickly learning that it is a real issue and can not be overlooked.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher M. Dube".

Christopher M. Dube, President
Professional Firefighters of Vermont