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Brandon Beck, Interim Fire  
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Reason Bradford, Fire Marshal  
Lawana Williams, Secretary

Proponent Testimony on SB 491  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Brandon Beck, Service Director, Lyon County City of Emporia Ambulance Service  
February 21, 2022

Madame Chair and Committee Members,

I am Brandon Beck, Service Director for the Lyon County City of Emporia Ambulance Service, and Interim Fire Chief for the City of Emporia. I am providing written testimony as a proponent for Senate Bill 491.

Senate Bill 491 would allow PTSD without physical injury to be compensable under the Kansas Workers Compensation Act. PTSD is a recognized disorder, and most mental health healthcare providers do not believe the diagnosis has to be linked to a physical injury. Workers Compensation law in Kansas defines an injury as meaning any change in the physical structure of the body, causing damage or harm thereto. This means a mental injury (PTSD) alone is not enough to be compensable because it doesn't meet the definition.

A single critical call can be detrimental to a responder. Whether it is treating a child, someone they know or even a family member, calls like this can leave a lasting impression on responders. Critical incident stress debriefings performed and peer support help in many situations, but sometimes that just isn't enough. In these situations, mental injury occurs, and more is necessary to help responders return to work and sometimes even just daily life. A sight or sound from that call can trigger a responder years down the road. Passing SB 491 can give Kansas responders another tool in the toolbox to help make life better again. Being able to get the type of mental health care needed is priceless in the eyes of the responder and their families.

With the current responder workforce shortage, steps need to be taken to aid departments in retaining the needed personnel to respond to emergencies in their communities. Adding PTSD to Kansas Workers Compensation law can assist in this goal. It's a shame to lose a dedicated employee due to the lack of available assistance to them in their time of need.

Madame Chair, I thank the committee for your time and willingness to work on SB 491.

Brandon Beck  
Service Director/Interim Fire Chief  
Lyon County City of Emporia Ambulance Service/Emporia Fire Department