**Helping Emergency Responders Overcome (HERO) Act of 2019**

The demanding and stressful tasks that public safety officers experience as part of their daily duties to keep the public safe can take a toll on those officers. Support, resources, and other tools must be available for fire fighters who may be experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to experiences as a result of the work they perform.

The HERO Act will help gather information to have a better grasp of how pervasive this issue is in public safety officers and provide support, resources and counseling for officers who need it. The data collected will also provide professionals with more information to craft best practices and improve measures to recognize, prevent and treat mental health issues among public safety officers.

**Major Provisions of HR 1646, the HERO Act**

 **Provides funding for peer-to-peer counseling for public safety officers PTSD –** Authorizes grants to establish and enhance peer-support behavioral health and wellness programs within local fire departments. These programs will train fire fighters to serve as peer counselors to assist their peers with behavioral health issues, including PTSD.

 **Collects data on suicides among public safety officers –** The bill requires the CDC to collect data on suicides among public safety officers that will be categorized by age, gender, state, occupation, status of officer (volunteer, paid-on-call or professional) and status (active or retired). Data will be collected in a safe, sensitive, anonymous and effective manner, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of victims. The data collected will be used to create an annual report

 **Help to recognize PTSD among public safety officers** – Requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop best practices to identify, prevent and treat PTSD and co-occurring disorders in public safety officers, including options for successful interventions to reduce suicide among public safety officers.

 **Provides health care providers with tools and resources on treating first responders with PTSD –** Requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop resources for mental health professionals about the culture of fire departments and evidence-based therapies for mental health issues common to fire fighters.

**Widely Supported by the Fire and EMS Service Community**

The HERO Act legislation is endorsed by the Congressional Fire Services Institute, International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, National Volunteer Fire Council, and National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians.