

HB 3426 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

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Meeting Dates: 5/4, 5/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Adds firefighters and first responders to high-risk and specialized population 9-8-8 operator staff trainings and policies.

Fiscal: No fiscal impact

Revenue: No revenue impact

House Vote: Ayes, 54; Excused, 3

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Firefighter and first responder rates of suicide, anxiety and depression
- Firefighter and first responder public service to communities
- Cumulative impact of special, high-risk employment factors of firefighter and first responder service

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act was passed unanimously by Congress October 2020 and replaced the National Suicide Hotline number with the three-digit number "9-8-8" – effective July 16, 2022. The Legislative Assembly appropriated \$15 million in House Bill 2417 (2021) to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to establish 9-8-8 call centers and enhance mobile crisis services. HB 2417 also required 9-8-8 call centers to establish policies and train staff on serving high-risk and specialized populations.

According to a 2021 brief by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), first responders including law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical services (EMS) clinicians, and public safety telecommunicators, are at an elevated risk for suicide due to workplace stress and trauma. The CDC cites law enforcement officers and firefighters as more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty; it notes that EMS providers are 1.39 times more likely to die by suicide than the public. The CDC also suggests that culturally competent mental health resources are needed for first responders, including trained personnel that understand the unique demands and culture in which they operate.

House Bill 3426 requires 9-8-8 call centers to develop policies and train staff to respond to calls from firefighters and first responders as a high-risk and specialized population.