



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

H.R. 2577, The “DHS Suicide Prevention and Resiliency for Law Enforcement Act”

***As Introduced by Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson
& Rep. Andrew Garbarino***

Endorsed by the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) & Blue H.E.L.P

H.R. 2577, the DHS Suicide Prevention and Resiliency for Law Enforcement Act establishes the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Resiliency Program within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to provide mental health and wellness oversight, guidance, and resources to officers and agents within the Department. Law enforcement officers’ exposure to multiple traumas throughout their careers increases suicidal risk. According to Boston University, 811 law enforcement officers ended their lives in the past six years and—just since February 27th— 16 law enforcement officers committed suicide.¹ Within DHS, in 2022, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported 15 suicides within its ranks—the most since 2007 (the year it started tracking such deaths). The 2022 suicide rate within CBP was almost double the number in 2020 and three times higher than the 2014 rate.² With a record number of officers and agents lost to suicide in recent years, DHS personnel need to be able to access an enhanced mental health program in conjunction with their workplace health insurance program.

The **DHS Suicide Prevention and Resiliency for Law Enforcement Act** directs DHS to address the mental health and wellness of its law enforcement personnel in a comprehensive manner that improves care and reduces the stigma associated with seeking help. The bill requires DHS components to prioritize mental health and wellness programs that, among other things, provide adequate resources for law enforcement-specific mental health, well-being, resilience, and suicide prevention programs and research.

¹ Danielle Rousseau, *Trauma and Suicide within Law Enforcement*, Boston University, Mar. 2, 2023, <https://sites.bu.edu/daniellerousseau/2023/03/02/trauma-and-suicide-within-law-enforcement/>.

² Joe Davidson, *Lawmakers, union and DHS fight suicide jump in customs agency*, The Washington Post, Mar. 3, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/03/03/cbp-suicides-bennie-thompson-funding/>.

Specifically, the Act requires the Department to:

- Conduct data collection and research on mental health, suicides, and attempted suicides, of DHS law enforcement personnel and participate in Federal reporting of incidents of suicide within its law enforcement workforce;
- Increase engagement in self-care, help-seeking, and support to others, to include the needs of supervisors, clinicians, care-givers, peer support members, chaplains, and those who have been exposed to trauma;
- Establish a Peer-to-Peer Support Program Advisory Council to evaluate individual Component peer support programs and provide for the sharing of trained peer support personnel, chaplains, and other peer-to-peer personnel across appropriate DHS components;
- Provide suicide prevention and resiliency support and training for families of law enforcement agents and officers and surviving families of agents and officers who have been lost to suicide;
- Promote a culture that reduces the stigma of seeking mental health assistance and revise policies that inadvertently deter law enforcement personnel from seeking help; and
- Require annual in-person or live and interactive virtual suicide awareness and law enforcement resiliency training.

H.R. 2577, the DHS Suicide Prevention and Resiliency for Law Enforcement Act seeks to ensure that DHS frontline law enforcement officers and agents can access mental health support and access to resources without having their careers adversely impacted. Effective implementation of this Act is important to addressing the morale and retention challenges within DHS' law enforcement workforce. Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), Chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and Josh Hawley (R-MO) introduced companion legislation in the Senate.