



March 11, 2026

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

S.5407-A / A.7285-A

(by Senator Harckham / Assemblyman Burdick)

First Responder Peer Support Program Act

The NYS Association of Fire Chiefs, the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York, and the Fire Coordinators Association of the State of New York support the above-referenced legislation.

This legislation would create a statewide grant program to establish peer-to-peer mental health programs for first responders, providing trauma-informed training, resources, and confidentiality protections for firefighters, law enforcement, EMS personnel, dispatchers, and other emergency responders.

First responders are frequently exposed to stressful and traumatic situations, which take an emotional toll on them. This legislation would ensure that first responders will receive critical resources including peer support programs to address the unique challenges they face. Peer programs offer support from those who have overcome similar experiences by helping them identify risk factors for behavioral and mental health problems and encouraging conversations about mental health in a comfortable environment among peers.

The bill's concept is modeled after the remarkable and highly successful Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project launched in 2012 that provides peer-to-peer support through confidential, one-on-one interactions among Veterans. This bill will go a long way in prioritizing the mental well-being of New York's first responders, by providing vital programs and services to connect with their peers and work together to improve their outcomes.

We fully support this legislation and urge you to vote YES on this bill.