

Brian Helmick
Fire Chief



SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF:

*Bethel Island
Brentwood
Byron*

*Discovery Bay
Knightsen
Morgan Territory
Oakley*

August 14, 2019

The Honorable Tim Grayson
California State Assembly
State Capitol Building, Room 4164
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1116 (Grayson) – Peer Support. (SUPPORT)

Dear Assemblymember Grayson:

On behalf of the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District (ECCFPD) we are pleased to express our support for AB 1116, which establishes statewide standards for a Firefighter Peer Support Program with accompanying provisions to protect the confidentiality of the peer supporter and participants in the program.

While support services may be available in some cases, first responders are often reluctant to utilize them for reasons including fear of adverse job impacts, the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and the perception among emergency personnel that they must show no signs of weakness. Assembly Bill 1116 will help ensure that California's first responders have access to trained peer support teams and peer support team members who are equipped to assist their fellow emergency service personnel.

Firefighters regularly respond to fires, stabbings, gun battles and shootings, domestic violence incidents, terrorist acts, automobile accidents, airplane crashes and earthquakes, just to name a few. Moreover, during the firestorms of this past decade, firefighters also have endured a growing stress while worrying about whether their own homes would burn down while on the fire lines protecting others -- often while the safety of their own family was threatened.

Ongoing budget constraints have also hindered the ECCFPD from providing a large scope of services, leading to several community leaders and residents considering proposals to detach from or dissolve the District. These limited resources are yet another added stressor for our firefighters.

By providing access to qualified, confidential support services we can ensure our first responders are not afraid to seek help, and most importantly, we can save lives. Again, we are happy to support Assembly Bill 1116, and thank you for your work on this important policy issue.

Sincerely,

Brian Helmick
Fire Chief