



2021 South Dakota Legislature

House Concurrent Resolution 6012

Introduced by: **Representative Cwach**

1 **A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, To encourage the Executive Board of the Legislature**
2 **to reauthorize the Mental Health of First Responders Task Force interim**
3 **legislative study.**

4 WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of South Dakota recognizes the importance and
5 value of this state's first responder community, including law enforcement officers,
6 firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and emergency dispatch personnel;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, the Ninety-Fifth Legislature of the State of South Dakota overwhelmingly voted
9 to recommend the creation of the Mental Health of First Responders Task Force, and the
10 Executive Board so established the Task Force; and

11 WHEREAS, the Task Force found that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can result in
12 depression, substance abuse, familial stress, high divorce rates, and increased risk of suicide
13 for members of the first responder community; and

14 WHEREAS, the Task Force found that over 8,500 of the members of this state's first
15 responder community, primarily in rural communities, serve the public as volunteers, and
16 have limited accessibility to resources that provide for their mental health and well-being;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, the Task Force found that the known suicide rate for firefighters and law
19 enforcement is five times higher than the civilian rates of suicide, but, according to experts
20 on the Task Force, the actual rate is likely higher; and

21 WHEREAS, the Task Force heard testimony from every corner of this state about personal
22 hardships that members of this state's first responder community face as a result of their
23 public service; and

1 WHEREAS, the Task Force found that access to appropriate mental health resources and
2 services for first responders is of critical importance to the recruitment and retention of first
3 responders; and

4 WHEREAS, the mental health and well-being of this state's first responder community is
5 of critical importance, for the safety of its members and for the safety of the public; and

6 WHEREAS, the Task Force recommended the introduction of two bills, HB 1063 and HB
7 1064, in the Ninety-Sixth Legislative Session in a strong first effort to improve access to
8 mental health services for members of this state's first responder community; and

9 WHEREAS, the Task Force should be reauthorized for another interim session for the
10 purposes of continuing efforts to study and address mental health needs and challenges facing
11 members of this state's first responder community and to report on the implementation of HB
12 1063 and HB 1064 to the Ninety-Seventh Legislature:

13 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the Ninety-Sixth
14 Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the Senate concurring therein, that it is
15 recommended to the Executive Board of the Legislature for the reauthorization of the Mental
16 Health in First Responders Task Force legislative study to address the mental health needs
17 and challenges facing first responders and to report on the implementation of HB 1063 and
18 HB 1064 to the Legislature; and

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mental Health of First Responders Task Force
20 legislative study is recommended to be under the supervision of the Executive Board of the
21 Legislative Research Council and staffed and funded as an interim legislative committee, and
22 that this committee report to the Legislature and the Governor before the beginning of the
23 Ninety-Seventh Legislative Session, including any further draft legislation or policy
24 recommendations.