



2021 South Dakota Legislature
House Concurrent Resolution
6012
ENROLLED

AN ACT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Adopted by the House of Representatives,
Concurred in by the Senate,

March 3, 2021
March 8, 2021

Spencer Gosch
Speaker of the House

Patricia Miller
Chief Clerk

Larry Rhoden
President of the Senate

Kay Johnson
Secretary of the Senate