



2020 South Dakota Legislature

House Concurrent Resolution 6023

*Introduced by: **Representative Milstead***

1 **A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, To encourage the Executive Board of the Legislature**
 2 **to create an interim legislative study to address the mental health of first**
 3 **responders.**

4 WHEREAS, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can result in depression, substance
 5 abuse, familial stress, high divorce rates and increased risk of suicide; and

6 WHEREAS, the suicide rate for firefighters and law enforcement is five times higher than
 7 the civilian rates of suicide, exceeding even line of duty deaths; and

8 WHEREAS, the South Dakota State Legislature recognizes the importance and value of
 9 our first responder community, including law enforcement officers, firefighters,
 10 EMT/Paramedics, and emergency dispatch personnel; and

11 WHEREAS, members of our first responder community are often exposed to multiple
 12 traumatic events during the performance of their duties; and

13 WHEREAS, as a result of their exposure to traumatic events, the prevalence of PTSD in
 14 first responders is significant with national estimates indicating that fifteen to twenty-two
 15 percent of firefighters and thirty-five percent of police officers suffer compared to only 6.8%
 16 of the general population; and

17 WHEREAS, the mental health and well-being of our first responders is of critical
 18 importance, for their own safety and for the safety of the public; and

19 WHEREAS, many first responders, particularly in rural South Dakota, serve the public as
 20 volunteers and may have few, if any resources to provide for their mental health and well-
 21 being; and

1 WHEREAS, access to appropriate mental health resources and services for first responders
2 is of critical importance to the recruitment and retention of first responders in South Dakota
3 communities:

4 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the Ninety-Fifth
5 Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the Senate concurring therein, that it is
6 recommended to the Executive Board of the Legislature for the creation and appointment of
7 an interim legislative study to address the mental health needs and challenges facing first
8 responders.

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that it is recommended that the interim legislative study
10 suggested under this resolution be under the supervision of the Executive Board of the
11 Legislative Research Council and staffed and funded as an interim legislative committee, and
12 this committee report to the Legislature and the Governor before the beginning of the Ninety-
13 Sixth Legislative Session, including any draft legislation or policy recommendations.