

# Mental Health of First Responders Task Force 2020 - HCR6023



## TITLE OF STUDY

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Mental Health of First Responders Task Force (HCR6023-2020)

## SCOPE OF STUDY

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To address the mental health needs and challenges facing first responders.

[HCR6023](#) attached.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Chair

*Representative Rhonda Milstead*

Vice Chair

*Representative Ryan Cwach*

Members

*Representative Doug Barthel*

*Senator Troy Heinert*

*Representative Tina Mulally*

*Senator VJ Smith*

*Representative Tamara St. John*

*Representative Larry Zikmund*

Non-Legislator Members

*Roger Belisle*

*Nick Carlson*

*Connie Johnson*

*Anne Kelly*

*Maynard Konechne*

*Tom Ward*

*Brad Wilson*





2020 South Dakota Legislature  
**House Concurrent Resolution**  
**6023**  
**ENROLLED**

AN ACT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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