



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GUILLEN EQUIPS FIRST RESPONDERS WITH PTSD BENEFITS

Expanding Workers' Compensation Eligibility for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

AUSTIN - Texas State Representative Ryan Guillen (D-Rural South Texas) is an author of HB 1983, a bill to allow first responders to receive workers' compensation benefits for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The bill was signed into law by Governor Abbott on **Thursday, June 1.**

"These courageous individuals put their lives on the line for us every day they're at work," said Guillen. "It is only right that we acknowledge the realities and dangers of PTSD, and allow our first responders to receive treatment for their trauma."

A 2015 published article in The Journal of Emergency Medical Services found that the suicide rate for first responders is more than ten times the rate of the general population. Our first responders can be exposed to traumatic events on a daily basis while performing their duties, and too often we are finding cases of PTSD. According to a study conducted by The Badge of Life, the leading cause of death among police officers is suicide, with Texas ranking amongst one of the highest rates in the nation.

"First responders shouldn't have to pay out of pocket to treat an illness that's a direct result of their job," said Guillen. "Their mental and physical health should be a priority in our state, and I strongly believe that this law will encourage more officers to seek help for their trauma."

Texas law previously only covered the broader category of mental impairment, which many say carries stigmas and financial burdens that could prevent some from seeking treatment. The new law will allow for compensation, provided that an individual who has served meets the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, specified by the American Psychiatric Association. First responders covered under the law include EMTs (entry level, intermediate, and paramedic), licensed paramedics, firefighters, and peace officers.

This Act will take effect on **September 1, 2017.**

Representative Ryan Guillen serves ten rural South Texas counties in the Texas House of Representatives, including Atascosa, Brooks, Duval, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, Starr, and Willacy.

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TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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