

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1115

Introduced by Assembly Member Castillo

February 20, 2025

An act to add Section 13543 to the Penal Code, relating to peace officers.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1115, as introduced, Castillo. Peace officers: mental health liaisons.

The California Constitution authorizes local governments to make and enforce all police and sanitary ordinances and regulations within its limits that are not in conflict with general laws. Existing law requires the board of supervisors of a county and the governing body of a city to take measures necessary to preserve and protect the public health in its jurisdiction.

This bill would authorize a local government to designate one or more existing employees specializing in counseling or mental health services as a law enforcement mental health liaison to facilitate mental health support for peace officers who serve the local jurisdiction.

The bill would make related findings and declarations.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

1 (a) Law enforcement officers are frequently exposed to traumatic
2 events, including violent crimes, accidents, and fatalities, which
3 can lead to mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress
4 disorder, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

5 (b) It is well documented that law enforcement officers
6 experience higher rates of mental health challenges than the general
7 population. These challenges can significantly affect their
8 well-being, decisionmaking, and job performance.

9 (c) The mental health of law enforcement officers directly
10 impacts their ability to perform their duties safely and effectively.
11 Officers struggling with mental health issues are more likely to
12 experience burnout, fatigue, and difficulty performing under stress,
13 all of which can negatively affect public safety and law
14 enforcement operations.

15 (d) Mental health challenges in law enforcement not only harm
16 the individual officers but can also compromise the safety of the
17 communities they serve, as untreated mental health conditions may
18 contribute to poor judgment or impaired decisionmaking during
19 critical incidents.

20 (e) Despite the clear need for mental health services, many law
21 enforcement officers face significant barriers to accessing mental
22 health care, including the stigma surrounding mental health issues,
23 concerns about confidentiality, and the lack of specialized programs
24 tailored to the unique needs of first responders.

25 (f) Many officers do not seek help due to fears that doing so
26 may impact their careers or reputation, leading to untreated mental
27 health conditions that can exacerbate problems over time.

28 (g) Law enforcement officers are essential to maintaining public
29 order, responding to emergencies, and ensuring the safety and
30 security of California's communities. For officers to continue
31 performing these duties effectively, they must be supported with
32 robust mental health resources that address the challenges of their
33 profession.

34 (h) Prioritizing mental health for law enforcement officers is
35 integral to the overall health of California's communities. Officers
36 with good mental health are better equipped to handle crisis
37 situations and maintain public trust, both of which contribute to
38 better public health outcomes for Californians.

39 SEC. 2. Section 13543 is added to the Penal Code, to read:

1 13543. A local government may designate one or more existing
2 employees specializing in counseling or mental health services as
3 a law enforcement mental health liaison to facilitate mental health
4 support for peace officers who serve the local jurisdiction.

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