

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 16, 2023

3:04 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Laddie Shaw, Chair  
Representative Stanley Wright, Vice Chair  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Representative Craig Johnson  
Representative Jamie Allard  
Representative Jennie Armstrong  
Representative Andi Story

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 4

Honoring the Alaska-Korea relationship; and celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea, the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement, and the 120th anniversary of the first Korean immigration to the United States.

- MOVED HJR 4 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 53

"An Act relating to state identifications and driver's licenses for persons in the custody of the Department of Corrections; relating to the duties of the commissioner of corrections; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD AND HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 15

"An Act relating to peer support counseling programs for law enforcement agencies, emergency service providers, and the Department of Corrections."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HJR 4

SHORT TITLE: HONORING THE ALASKA-KOREA RELATIONSHIP

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) MINA

02/08/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/08/23 (H) MLV, STA  
02/28/23 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
02/28/23 (H) Heard & Held  
02/28/23 (H) MINUTE(MLV)  
03/02/23 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
03/02/23 (H) Moved HJR 4 Out of Committee  
03/02/23 (H) MINUTE(MLV)  
03/08/23 (H) MLV RPT 5DP  
03/08/23 (H) DP: GRAY, SADDLER, SHAW, GROH, WRIGHT  
03/16/23 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 53

SHORT TITLE: STATE IDENTIFICATION CARD FOR PRISONERS

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) GRAY

02/01/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/01/23 (H) STA, FIN  
03/16/23 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 15

SHORT TITLE: PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAM

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) JOSEPHSON

01/19/23 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23  
01/19/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/19/23 (H) STA, HSS  
03/16/23 (H) STA AT 3:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE GENEVIEVE MINA

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HJR 4, as the prime sponsor.

DAVID SONG, Board Secretary

Korean Cultural Center Alaska

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HJR 4.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW GRAY

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 53, as the prime sponsor.

NATE GRAHAM, Staff  
Representative Andrew Gray  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 53, on behalf of Representative Gray, prime sponsor.

APRIL WILKERSON, Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Corrections  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 53.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 15, as the prime sponsor.

ANGELINA SALVATO, Senior Patrol Officer  
Anchorage Police Department;  
Anchorage Police Department Employees Association  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony during the hearing on HB 15.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:04:06 PM](#)

**CHAIR LADDIE SHAW** called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:04 p.m. Representatives Carpenter, Armstrong, Story, and Shaw were present at the call to order. Representatives C. Johnson, Allard, and Wright arrived as the meeting was in progress.

#### **HJR 4-HONORING THE ALASKA-KOREA RELATIONSHIP**

[3:05:26 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 4, "Honoring the Alaska-Korea relationship; and celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea, the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement,

and the 120th anniversary of the first Korean immigration to the United States."

[3:06:12 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GENEVIEVE MINA, Alaska State Legislature, prime sponsor, presented HJR 4. She paraphrased the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

HJR 4 honors the unique relationship and shared history between the State of Alaska and the Republic of Korea. Korean immigrants came to Alaska to work in the fishing and canning industries, forming tight-knit communities and social institutions. The Korean-American community is a vital part of Alaska's diversity. They serve as Alaska as military personnel, police officers, fire fighters, nurses and doctors, teachers, business owners, public servants, and more - contributing their talents to Alaska's safety, diversity, and unity.

Additionally, the government of South Korea has served as an important partner in national security and trade. The Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953 between the United States and the Republic of Korea strengthened the defense of both countries against external threats, particularly from North Korea. The Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport is a growing hub for air cargo to and from the Republic of Korea, and Alaska has become an important destination for thousands of Korean tourists each year. Since 1986, the Municipality of Anchorage and Incheon Metropolitan City have been sister cities, leading to economic opportunities and increased cultural exchange between the two regions.

House Joint Resolution 4 seeks to honor and celebrate the friendly and beneficial relationship between the United States and the Republic of Korea, and the unique role Alaska has in that relationship.

[3:10:09 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW invited questions from members of the committee.

[3:10:17 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed her gratitude for the informative resolution, adding that she was surprised to learn that Korea was [America's] largest trade partner. She inquired about the Korea-Alaska Friendship Festival.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA discussed the Korea-Alaska Friendship Festival, noting that it was hosted by the Korean American community of Anchorage (KACA). She stated that KACA hosted a variety of events, such as multicultural unity conversations, training for elders, small business nonprofit seminars, senior academy, scholarship day, and scholarship programs that had paid out \$20,000 annually to many Alaskan students for the past 20 years.

[3:12:37 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW opened public testimony on HJR 4.

[3:12:58 PM](#)

DAVID SONG, Board Secretary, Korean Cultural Center Alaska, testified in support of HJR 4. He paraphrased written remarks [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

I am writing today as a member of the Korean community in Alaska to show my support for HJR 4, "Honoring the Alaska-Korea Relationship.

There has been a long-standing relationship between our state and the country of South Korea. South Korea is one of Alaska's top trade partners, Alaskans have fought for the independence of South Korea during the Korean War, and Korean-Americans have established themselves as an integral part of our Alaskan community.

Korean Americans in Alaska are deeply involved in our small business community, both in urban and rural communities across the state. The Korean American Community of Anchorage (KACA) has donated hundreds of thousands in scholarship funds to students of all backgrounds over the years, and are deeply involved in philanthropic efforts across the state.

For example, SB 203, sponsored by Senator Revak, named a bridge in your district after Insook Baik, who has donated thousands of dollars of meals to the Mountain View community. Last year, our very own Miss Alaska was chosen to be Miss America in 2022 and is an involved member of the Korean American community. We are proud that she represented the Korean community gracefully on the national stage and used her platform to advocate for the Special Olympics.

Alaska has already recognized the deep relationship between our two countries through Korea-Alaska Friendship Day, which is held on 6/25 of every year. However, I believe that HJR 4 would be a powerful reaffirmation of this relationship. To honor the contributions of Koreans to Alaska and for the betterment of the relationships between our two countries, I urge the Legislature to pass HJR 4 posthaste.

CHAIR SHAW closed public testimony on HJR 4.

[3:15:10 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER recounted his experience serving in Korea for a military exercise, which he described as inspirational. He noted his surprise at the amount of high tunnels and greenhouses in addition to the investment in infrastructure that allowed them to grow crops for a longer period. He expressed appreciation for the time he spent there and for the proposed resolution.

CHAIR SHAW shared his experience training with the Korean frogmen, emphasizing the value of Korea and HJR 4.

[3:17:20 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[3:17:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT moved to report HJR 4 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying zero fiscal note. There being no objection, HJR 4 was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

[3:18:49 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

**HB 53-STATE IDENTIFICATION CARD FOR PRISONERS**

[3:21:34 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 53, "An Act relating to state identifications and driver's licenses for persons in the custody of the Department of Corrections; relating to the duties of the commissioner of corrections; and providing for an effective date."

[3:22:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW GRAY, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 53. He paraphrased the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 53 provides easier access to identification cards for reentrants upon release, granting them an important tool for reintegration. HB 53 will require the Department of Administration to issue a state ID to all reentrants who are serving a term of imprisonment over 120 days who would otherwise be released without a valid ID.

Individuals are required to present a valid form of ID in order to gain new employment, apply for housing, drive a car, open a bank account, travel, purchase a phone, apply for Medicaid, social security, obtaining medication, and registering to vote. The lack of a valid ID could cause a reentrant to reoffend or violate their conditions of release.

Reentry is an essential part of public safety. Ensuring reentrants are supported during their transitional period helps improve community well-being and public safety. By providing reentrants with a valid form of identification upon their release we also provide the individual with an essential tool for finding housing, employment, and medical care, and alleviate the risk of reoffending.

In prior legislatures it was determined that HB 53 would add no additional costs to the state. HB 53 may

reduce costs to the state by reducing recidivism numbers.

Please join me in supporting House Bill 53.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY believed that providing incarcerated individuals with the means to get started on the right foot was the least the state could do if the purpose of incarceration was to correct behavior.

[3:25:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said she was fortunate to have experienced the reentry simulations offered by the Juneau Reentry Coalition, which highlighted the need for this bill. She inquired about the language "good faith effort" on page 4, line 15 of HB 53 and asked how that would work.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY deferred to his staff, Mr. Graham.

[3:26:15 PM](#)

NATE GRAHAM, Staff, Representative Andrew Gray, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Gray, prime sponsor of HB 53, explained that "[making] a good faith effort" to help prisoners obtain a valid state identification card went a step beyond the existing statutory language, "assist". He indicated that a forthcoming committee substitute (CS) might address the language in question.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked how many incarcerated individuals were released from custody on an annual basis.

[3:27:48 PM](#)

APRIL WILKERSON, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Corrections (DOC), reported that 12 percent of the individuals released from custody were released without a valid state identification (ID) or driver's license.

[3:28:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked, "Twelve percent of what number?"

MS. WILKERSON answered approximately 30,000.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD observed that there was no fiscal note associated with the bill. She asked how the bill would improve the current system.

MS. WILKERSON acknowledged that there would be no fiscal impact on the department. She explained that instead of releasing prisoners with a piece of paper, a recent change to procedure allowed them to release with a card that could be exchanged for a valid state ID at the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked how the bill would improve those efforts.

MS. WILKERSON indicated that the bill would allow the DOC issued card to be recognized as a valid temporary ID.

[3:31:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT asked whether the proposed legislation would remove a barrier to individuals being released from custody.

MS. WILKERSON answered yes, for reentry purposes, the bill would assist with those efforts.

[3:31:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER asked whether the temporary ID was for people who lacked a state ID prior to incarceration.

MS. WILKERSON said the temporary ID would be offered to anyone releasing from custody who was not in possession of a state ID.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER asked why the applicable term of imprisonment must exceed 120 days.

MS. WILKERSON deferred to the bill sponsor. She noted that the temporary IDs would be valid for a period of six months to provide enough time to obtain an official state ID from the DMV.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER asked whether a photograph of the individual would appear on the temporary card.

MS. WILKERSON confirmed that an official photo was taken at the time of release, which was printed on the card itself.

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REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON sought to verify that the temporary card would serve as a valid state ID to be used for services, such as opening a bank account.

MS. WILKERSON shared her understanding that the intent of the policy was to issue an official temporary ID. She deferred to the bill sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON pointed out that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) required valid state ID to fly. He asked whether this temporary ID could be used to get on an airplane.

MR. GRAHAM clarified that the intent was for the temporary ID to act as a valid state ID - not the Real ID.

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REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON surmised that the temporary cards could be used to flee the state due to the delayed deadline for Real ID compliance.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY confirmed that if Real ID was not yet required and the temporary card was recognized as a valid state ID, the card could be utilized to travel out of state.

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REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD pointed out that that once the individual releasing from custody obtained a valid driver's license, he/she could leave the state.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY answered in the affirmative.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked whether this policy was only applicable to people who spent over 120 days in custody.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY shared his understanding that the forthcoming CS would include all people releasing from incarceration.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked whether the temporary ID had an expiration date.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY stated that the ID issued by DOC would be valid only for six months.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD said, "That's a long time."

[3:37:40 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT asked whether the temporary IDs would be provided to individuals whose state IDs had expired while in custody.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY answered yes.

[3:38:23 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that HB 53 would be held over.

[3:38:47 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

**HB 15-PEER SUPPORT COUNSELING PROGRAM**

[3:40:06 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 15, "An Act relating to peer support counseling programs for law enforcement agencies, emergency service providers, and the Department of Corrections."

[3:40:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, introduced HB 15. He paraphrased the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

HB 15 establishes the ability for law enforcement officers and first responders to seek mental health counseling regarding classified information without jeopardizing ongoing investigations. Under current law, public safety officers are extremely limited in their options to discuss stressful and traumatic events that occur in their workplace because they are often, by their nature, related to criminal investigations. HB 15 addresses the critical need to de-stigmatize mental health issues that affect many public safety officers by providing a safe and

confidential way for them to talk about emotionally intense aspects of their work.

HB 15 does not mandate changes to existing agencies, but merely allows them to establish a peer support counseling program. A law enforcement agency, emergency service provider, or the Department of Corrections will have the opportunity to designate an existing employee as a peer counselor if they have prior counseling training. Any participant who seeks counseling from their designated peer is guaranteed confidentiality in those communications. Confidential space for participants to discuss emotionally traumatic events is key for creating effective Critical Incident Stress Management debriefs, which the United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration recognizes as crucial for preventing and mitigating the effects of trauma. The confidentiality created by the peer counseling program does not apply to any threats that the participant makes, and it does not apply to any admission of criminal conduct.

HB 15 will ultimately provide emotional relief and a path to healing for the Alaskans who bear the burden of protecting the public on a daily basis. I urge you to support HB 15.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON listed several questions that the committee may want to discuss to improve the bill, such as, the penalty for a counselor who disclosed something in violation of the act. He reiterated that the intent of the bill was to provide police officers an opportunity to begin to heal from trauma.

CHAIR SHAW invited questions from members of the committee.

[3:44:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WRIGHT asked whether a pilot program had been implemented.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON recalled that DPS had referenced a pilot program in the fiscal note. He opined that Alaska needed to "get on board" with other states who had implemented similar programs.

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REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER inquired about the mandatory reporting requirements and questioned whether the communications offered by participants would be confidential.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON directed attention to Section 1, subsection (c), indicating that the confidentiality would not apply to the following:

- (1) a threat of suicide or homicide made by a participant in a peer support counseling session or any information relating to a threat of suicide or homicide;
- (2) information that is required by law to be reported;
- (3) information relating to the abuse of a child or a vulnerable adult;
- (4) any admission of criminal conduct.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON indicated that the service was designed to be like a "sacred space" for first responders to talk through and process their day-to-day experiences.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER asked why that wasn't being done now.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON discussed the cultural and employment elements that may deter "men in blue" from seeking help. He reiterated that the policy was designed to be a legal shield to provide assurances around disclosing information.

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REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER sought to verify that this program could offer a space for police officers to discuss taboo topics and things that could otherwise have job performance implications.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON agreed. Further, he confirmed that there was a pilot program within the Anchorage Police Department (APD).

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER shared his understanding that the bill was being presented as having zero fiscal impact. He asked whether costs would increase in the future as the program was being implemented across the state.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON offered to inquire about the costs associated with the APD pilot program. He shared his understanding that the program was currently facing funding issues. He reiterated that the bill would provide the basic framework for a peer support counseling program.

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REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER said he was unfamiliar with the relationship between police bargaining units and administration. He asked whether the bill was intended to solve an existing dispute between those two entities.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON said he did not know the answer. He surmised that the department, in addition to the officers, would benefit from this type of service, as it would accommodate psychological trauma and provide an opportunity to heal.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER maintained his confusion as to why the police departments had not implemented this policy on their own determination.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON suggested that the traumatized officer would be more reluctant to participate without the protections provided in HB 15. He acknowledged police departments could do it administratively; however, the legislation would be the enabling act to make the program official and viable while offering a legal shield.

[3:53:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON inquired about the enabling policy that allowed APD and the Alaska State Troopers (AST) to stand up their existing pilot programs.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON offered to follow up with the requested information.

[3:55:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked whether the union brought the legislation forward.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON answered, "Yes, that's fair."

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD remarked:

I was told that the legislators who brought this forward - that they said there was a misunderstanding of the difference between what the union wants and what the administration wants. They said that they already do this and that they didn't realize that they now need permission to continue to do it, and they were actually taken aback by this bill.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked whether the sponsor had spoken with the administration.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON answered no. Nonetheless, he pointed out that if the administration [had already implemented a similar policy] they shouldn't be opposed to the bill. He offered to follow up after speaking with the chief of police at APD.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD said she was puzzled at why this bill being brought forward if the program was already being utilized. She suggested that the bill would pit the administration against the unions.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON directed attention to Section 1, subsection (b), noting that the program was optional. He indicated that it would require administration "buy in."

[3:58:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD asked, "forced buy-in?"

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON answered no, due to the "may" language on page 1, line 11 of the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD expressed concern that HB 15 would politicize the issue and put pressure on organizational leadership to opt in. She asked whether the bill sponsor agreed.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON said he would be dishonest to say there's no merit in that statement; however, he opined that cajoling and pressure was part of life.

[3:59:09 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON asked whether the peer support counselors within the police department would be insured or

protected against financial harm for giving an officer bad advice.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON shared his understanding that good counselors would act as empathetic sounding boards. He offered to ask stakeholders whether immunity should be included in the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON pointed out that Representative Josephson had referenced "good counselors." He pondered the type of training and qualifications required of a peer counselor.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON said as drafted, the bill clarified that peer counselors must receive training and counseling on providing emotional support to peace officers and emergency service personnel who experienced trauma during the course of employment. He welcomed a friendly amendment to expound on that; however, he noted that master's level clinicians were not required.

[4:04:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY shared her understanding that public safety work was traumatic. She imagined that having a mental health clinician on staff would be standard practice; however, she discussed the merits of having a peer counselor who had walked in the same shoes as the officers.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON agreed. He elaborated on instances of counselors being court ordered to testify.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked whether police departments had their own mental health clinicians on staff.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON said he did not know.

[4:07:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE C. JOHNSON declared a conflict of interest, noting that his daughter was a clinical psychologist. He pointed out that families suffer just as much as the traumatized officers. He suggested the inclusion of peer counseling support for the families.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON acknowledged the damage to marriages and relationships across the board for law enforcement.

[4:10:14 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW inquired about the two zero fiscal notes and invited the bill sponsor to speak to them.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON said there was nothing notable to add.

[4:10:41 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW proceeded to invited testimony.

[4:11:01 PM](#)

ANGELINA SALVATO, Senior Patrol Officer, Anchorage Police Department; Anchorage Police Department Employees Association (APDEA), highlighted her twenty-year career in law enforcement. She recounted an incident in which she had to use deadly force during a traffic stop and the associated trauma she experienced. She discussed the cultural perception that talking about one's problems was weak. She emphasized that the bill would allow officers to participate in critical incident stress management with a peer counselor - someone who had walked in their shoes. She conveyed that the pilot program was currently supported by the federal government, adding that the grants from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) provided for internal clinical support. She emphasized that the bill would provide legal protections that were lacking in existing practice, indicating that the added protection would encourage officers to participate.

[4:17:00 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW opened public testimony on HB 15. After ascertaining that no one online or in person wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[4:17:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON proceeded to summarize a PowerPoint presentation on HB 15 [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He began on slide 4, titled "Other States with Peer Support Programs for EMS and Law Enforcement," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

1. Illinois - Establishes a peer support program, provides for confidentiality.

2. Idaho - Establishes a guarantee of confidentiality for peer support programs in EMS/Law enforcement. Relates to evidence, defines terms, to prohibit disclosure of certain communications, to provide exceptions, to provide that certain disclosures are subject to the rules of the Idaho Supreme Court.

3. Indiana - Relates to peer support services and critical incident stress management services (CISM), provides for confidentiality.

4. Louisiana - Provides for the Peace Officer and Public Safety Personnel Peer Support and Mental Health Wellness Act

5. South Dakota - Makes an appropriation for and the establishment of peer support and critical incident stress management training for first responder organizations, declares an emergency.

6. Texas - Relates to a mental health program that includes peer-to-peer counseling for certain law enforcement personnel, allows for contracting with an institution of higher education that has appropriate expertise in mental health or law enforcement to develop the peer support network.

[4:18:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON continued to slide 5, titled "Sobering Statistics," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

69% of EMS providers report not having time to recover after stressful event

30% of first responders develop depression and PTSD, among other things, compared to 20% in the general population

Two studies illustrated that suicidal ideation is experienced by EMS at alarming rates. 28% feel that life is not worth living. 10.4% percent have experienced a serious suicidal ideation.

In another, it was found that having both EMS and firefighting duties was associated with a sixfold increase in the likelihood of reporting a suicide attempt as compared to firefighting alone.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON concluded on slide 6, titled "Why this bill?" Slide 6 read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- This bill is an important step in addressing the stigma around the mental health of public safety professionals, by providing them a safe space to talk about their mental health.
- The confidentiality aspect is crucial, as it allows employees to come forward and be open about their experiences.
- Incidentally, this bill will contribute to workforce retention. As these individuals are expected to do more with less, they will often be placed in dangerous, unpredictable situations. The need for peer support systems will be crucial in ensuring that law enforcement and EMS will have long, healthy careers.

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REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER considered a scenario in which an officer was sent to a non-affiliated counselor to talk through an issue. He asked whether that would solve the problem.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON responded that that would be halfway there; however, it was missing the shared experience that a peer support counselor would otherwise provide.

[4:21:01 PM](#)

CHAIR SHAW announced that HB 15 would be held over.

[4:21:55 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at [4:21] p.m.