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ACR-192 Firefighter Mental Health Awareness Week. (2021-2022)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 192

CHAPTER 95

Relative to Firefighter Mental Health Awareness Week.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 28, 2022.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 192, Grayson. Firefighter Mental Health Awareness Week.

This measure would proclaim the week of May 23 through May 27, inclusive, as Firefighter Mental Health Awareness Week.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Firefighting is a dangerous and physically demanding profession that requires the men and women of the fire service to routinely put themselves in harm's way for the good of the communities that they serve; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the physical demands of the profession, firefighting has been consistently rated as one of the most stressful and emotionally intense professions, often listed second only to front-line military personnel; and

WHEREAS, Firefighters, paramedics, and emergency medical service personnel assist people at the worst moments of their lives on a daily basis, experiencing repeated exposure to trauma as they work to assist others; and

WHEREAS, Long shifts, protracted time spent away from family and loved ones, and an ingrained culture of stoicism exacerbate the effects of these stresses, contributing to struggles and behavioral health issues, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, more firefighters have died by suicide than from traumatic, job-related incidents; and

WHEREAS, According to the Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance, in 2021 90 firefighters and EMTs died by suicide, and 126 died by suicide in 2020; and

WHEREAS, Studies have shown that one in five firefighters will experience a post-traumatic stress injury at some point in their career and that firefighters are 10 times more likely to contemplate or attempt suicide than the general public; and

WHEREAS, Breaking the stigma related to behavioral health struggles and post-traumatic stress is critical to ensuring that firefighters, paramedics, and emergency medical service personnel receive the care and resources they need in the form of peer support and professional counseling; and

WHEREAS, Peer support programs and confidential discussions with trusted colleagues and peers with similar work and life experiences provide not only an outlet to express these struggles but also allow for connections to life-saving resources; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby proclaims the week of May 23 through May 27, inclusive, as Firefighter Mental Health Awareness Week; and be it further

Resolved, That California firefighters are urged to dedicate this week to discussions with their brothers and sisters of the impacts they face from the job, resources that are available, and destigmatizing behavioral health struggles; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.