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|------|------------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|
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ACR-174 Firefighter Suicide Awareness and Prevention Stand Down Week. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 174

CHAPTER 100

Relative to Firefighter Suicide Awareness and Prevention Stand Down Week.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 14, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 174, Grayson. Firefighter Suicide Awareness and Prevention Stand Down Week.

This measure would proclaim the week of May 19 to May 25, inclusive, as Firefighter Suicide Awareness and Prevention Stand Down 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, 75 firefighters, 23 emergency medical services personnel, and three dispatchers died by suicide in 2023; and

WHEREAS, Studies have shown that one in three 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 19 to May 25, inclusive, as Firefighter Suicide Awareness and Prevention Stand Down Week; and be it further

Resolved, That in response to these alarming statistics and the prevalence of suicide in the fire service, the California Fire Service Task Force on Behavioral Health, through its four sponsoring organizations, California Professional Firefighters, California Fire Chiefs Association, California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee, and the Office of Emergency Services, urges California fire departments to replace drills and activities during this week with kitchen table discussions around behavioral health and suicide awareness that will consider the impacts of the job, where to go for resources, and how to give and get help; and be it further

Resolved, That these kitchen table discussions are intended to build up and strengthen the support networks for firefighters and emergency medical services personnel in California; and be it further

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