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California State Senate

SENATOR
JOHN LAIRD

SEVENTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT



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August 13, 2025

Mitch Steiger, Chair
Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1540
Oakland, CA 94612

RE: SB 623 (Laird, 2023) Study – RFP Development

Dear Chair Steiger:

As the author of Senate Bill 623, I am writing to encourage the Commission to request that the University of California or California State University system create a proposal for a study to review post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI) claims among public safety dispatchers.

SB 623 directed the Commission to complete a report on the number and disposition of claims submitted by public safety dispatchers for PTSI in the workers' compensation system no later than January 1, 2025 and, separately analyze the effectiveness of the existing presumption by January 1, 2027. While a Request for Information (RFI) was released by the Commission in November 2024, this RFI only returned one response. It was subsequently discovered that due to the terms of the Request for Proposal developed by the Commission, the UC/CSU system would not be able to respond.

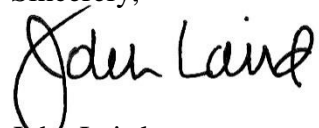
This study is critically important to the workers who serve our communities as public safety dispatchers. While it is well documented that firefighters and law enforcement personnel work in jobs with severely heightened levels of stress and are regularly exposed to traumatic experiences, they are not the only members of the public safety workforce to do so. Public safety dispatchers are on the receiving end of a call for help. They are tasked with calming frightened or injured individuals so that they can obtain necessary information, and frequently remain on the line to speak with those individuals while emergency services are on the way.

These dispatchers are currently able to submit claims for workers' compensation for PTSI, but many have reported severe difficulty in having these claims approved without access to a presumption. Additionally, due to both the size and scope of the workers' compensation as well as the sensitive nature of these cases, it is extremely difficult to gather information on how many claims are submitted, approved, and denied. This work requires the dedicated attention of research professionals, work that is best completed by the world-class researchers at the University of California or California State University systems.

The Commission has already identified the option to directly request that a UC or CSU assemble a proposal for this study for review and approval by the Commission. This direct method would reduce the delay in an already overdue study, and ensure that the teams best equipped to complete this research are tasked with the work. I strongly urge the Commission to pursue this option and ensure that the UC and CSU systems are able to complete the study. It is past time that we understood the scope and severity of PTSI among public safety dispatchers, and how the workers' compensation system is serving this critical piece of the public safety community.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact my staff, Tammy Trinh at 916-651-4017.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Laird". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "J" and a stylized "L".

John Laird

California State Senator, 17th District