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**NEVADA C.O. LODGE 21
FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE**

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April 5, 2024

To the Nevada Interim Finance Committee and Other Interested Parties:

My name is Jonathan R. Allen-Ricksecker, and I serve the Fraternal Order of Police Nevada C.O. Lodge 21 as the Chairman of Trustee's and a Union Stewart; the second largest organization of peace officers within the State of Nevada, with over 950 active and retired peace officers. The lodge represents two bargaining units consisting of more than 1600 peace officers. I am an active correctional officer myself with almost 24 years of sworn service with the Nevada Department of Corrections.

I am submitting my strong support for the Peer Support Program which is an action item (NDOC SCAAP re-allocation under section 7) for consideration on the April 11th, 2024 agenda. I ask that this correspondence be included in the official record.

WE ARE NOT OK! With your assistance Nevada Peace Officers will be empowered and afforded the opportunity outside of the state's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The Peer Support Program is not a substitute for professional help it is more similar to preventative maintenance; it is a distinctly different avenue to seek assistance when necessary from a well-trained trusted peer support team member who fulfills several key functions depending upon the nature of the situation by using developed protocols; may assist with some agency responsibilities; and acts as a concerned listener who is in a unique position to relate to and emphasize with issues being raised that are specific to law enforcement. As these peers are co-workers and are familiar with the agency personnel, and due to knowing what's going on a regular ongoing basis they can be very effective in watching and seeing changes in behavior patterns, keeping conversations private and confidential, and doing regular check-ins with distressed officers. The peer support program is informal; is private; and if properly funded available 24 hours a day to assist peace officers with issues or pressures the officer may be having difficulties that are work related or occur within their personal lives. There are no official records kept of individuals

that utilize the Peer Support Program or any sessions. The Peer Support Team will more quickly be able to recognize when a co-worker is in distress, in need of resources and or support, and intervene or redirect. Peer support team members will be trained in debriefings; critical incident debriefing; and are available to provide extra support during and post critical incidents. Personnel will be more trusting and open to using outside resources when needed if a trusted peer refers them. Peer support teams can also coordinate with wellness partners and or provide information and resources on matters related to but not necessarily limited to providing support and logistics to an officer who experiences an on-the-job injury; providing support to the officer's family; death notifications and/or funeral planning; and or a variety of other functions and activities that will help the officer heal and be better equipped to move forward.

Wellness programs are not limited to being exclusively responsive and maybe utilized as preventative maintenance, they should assist and improve an officer's mental health, reduce stress, and assist with coping mechanisms which if ignored could result in significant negative emotional and/or physical reactions. Overwhelming situations common to law enforcement may impact life at work, home, during the academy, in training, or after retirement. Officers may experience persistent and intense feelings of discomfort, stress, confusion, losing control, engage in self-destructive behavior, have suicidal thoughts, being planning or even take steps in furtherance of a suicide.

Nevada Peace Officers as first responders are routinely subjected to encounters, situations, accidents, incidents, suicides, and homicides that include some of the most emotionally charged, heart wrenching, brutal, horrific, and deadly scenes anyone could imagine. They as often as not respond to calls for service and see humans at their worst. They are often themselves the focus of threats, violent assaults, batteries; of which often threaten their own well-being and occasionally unfortunately may even result in the death of a co-worker. These extreme experiences result in both visible and invisible scares. Most peace officers are reluctant to formally discuss their emotional scares in any official or formal setting as they may feel that they will be ridiculed, looked upon as a liability, or foster valid concerns that such disclosure may negative impact their career or even their continual employment. Peer Support Programs are an excellent avenue to provide a progressive supportive framework to address and assist peace officers in need.

The National Fraternal Order of Police has conducted research into the benefits of peer support, and we know from these efforts that peer support is repeatedly indicated as a preferred resource among officers, and for this reason and others, it works.

On behalf of all our FOP Members and all the Officers throughout the great State of Nevada, I humbly ask for your partnership in approving the funding to build a successful peer support program for officer wellness.

Respectfully,
Jonathan R. Allen-Ricksecker
Chairman of Trustee's & Stewart
FOP
Nevada C.O. Lodge 21

