



MCO-BACKED BILLS ON SUICIDE, NARCAN PROGRESS IN LEGISLATURE THIS WEEK

Over the last few years, MCO has worked diligently to educate the public and legislature about the severity of post-traumatic stress and the resulting risk of suicide within the Department of Corrections. MCO has continued advocating for the membership and we're now getting some results at the legislature.

Senate Bill No. 228 would create a 25-member suicide prevention commission. The commission would work with state departments, agencies, and non-profits on researching the causes of suicide in Michigan. The commission would be divided into subcommittees that would focus on specific demographics, such as first responders and veterans. **If the bill passes and becomes law, one member of the commission will be chosen from a list of officers submitted by MCO.** The bill's sponsor, Sen. Jim Runestad (R-15th district), supports corrections officers, and we are grateful to him for taking a stand for front-line staff.

The first report of the suicide commission's research would be presented by January 1, 2020. The report would include possible reasons why suicide rates have

increased, as well as recommendations for prevention. The report would be updated and presented to the legislature each year after until 2027, but the commission would provide recommendations for continued state efforts to reduce risk factors leading to suicide.

This bill is already making progress. It passed out of the Senate Health Policy and Services Committee April 25. Next it will go to the full Senate.

At a committee hearing earlier this month, Sen. Runestad said Michigan has more deaths by suicide each year than all deaths resulting from traffic accidents and guns combined. The senator also said that half of the people who die from suicide have no known history of mental health conditions. Citing the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, Sen. Runestad revealed that suicides have risen by more than 33 percent in Michigan since 1999.

Also at the hearing, Sen. Ruth Johnson (R-14th district) recommended that a researcher that focuses on the chemicals and structure of the brain be added to the commission. That suggestion was added to the version of the bill that will go to the full

Senate. Other suggestions by committee members included adding staggered terms and consideration of programs other states have implemented. MCO issued a card of support at the committee meeting.

We got to this point thanks to union leaders' and officers' tireless advocacy over the past few years. In addition to our visible efforts, like media interviews and the PTSD assessment in 2016, we have had countless conversations with the MDOC administration and legislators about the reality of PTSD and suicide among prison staff. Progress doesn't always come quickly, but if we keep up a steady effort, we can achieve success.

The legislature also took action this week on HB 4056, which would classify COs as first responders and allow them to carry and administer opioid antagonists like Naloxone, also known as Narcan. This is vital not only for inmate safety, but for officer safety in case of an exposure. The bill was read before the entire House and referred to the Ways and Means Committee.

MCO will keep members updated on these bills.

- Report by Mikaela Bliven

AROUND THE STATE: OFFICERS AT DDC, ARF ASSAULTED

A detainee at the Detroit Detention Center punched an officer several times as he was being released from jail April 22.

The officer was sent to urgent care for treatment. The detainee was charged with assault but released pending an investigation.

DDC could benefit from a psychiatrist or counselor to help staff handle inmates who may have a mental health problem, officers said. DDC is also dealing with the same low staffing levels that are affecting other MDOC-operated facilities throughout the state.

An inmate with mental health issues hit an officer who was scanning inmates' IDs in the chow hall April 17.

The CO suffered a ruptured eardrum. He has not returned to work.

After the assault, the prisoner immediately laid down on the floor and placed his hands behind his back so officers could restrain him.

The prisoner was housed in the Level IV Residential Treatment Program unit, which is for inmates with mental health disorders.

Please join us in wishing for a quick recovery for both officers.

New website coming soon!

MCO's new website is tentatively scheduled to launch next week! Members can see a sneak peak of it in our [members-only Facebook group](#). The site will still be mco-seiu.org.

The new site will still have all the resources members use frequently, like the contract and discounts, but will also help us change the narrative of corrections staff. The new site shows anyone who visits it that you are law enforcement professionals who make sacrifices everyday to keep the public safe.

Read more about why we're updating our website [in this KYI](#).