

2-23-21

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Bill: HB 248, Mental Health Support Program for First Responders

Sponsor: Rep. Kwan

Floor Sponsor: Sen. Thatcher

UASD Position: Support

This Bill: relates to mental health resources for first responders.

Discussion: Representative Kwan stated that first responders have had an increase in mental health needs during the current pandemic without expansions for mental health programs for first responders during this same time period. More first responders are lost each year to suicide than to line of duty deaths. HB 248 requires the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to administer a grant program to provide mental health resources for first responders. The fund will receive a one-time appropriation of \$1 million from the General Fund. First responder agencies may request grants to expand or create programs for mental health programs. The Utah Chiefs of Police Association, Utah State Fire Chiefs Association, Weber Area Dispatch 911, Utah Association of Special Districts and Salt Lake Valley Emergency Communications Center support this bill. An evaluation of this grant program will be presented to the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Interim Committee before July 2024.

Yeas: 6

Nays: 0

N/V: 2

Outcome: Passed out of committee with a favorable recommendation

Bill: SB 208, Employee Medical Procedure Protection Act

Sponsor: Sen. Kennedy

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill: enacts the Employee Medical Procedure Protection Act.

Discussion: Amendment number two was adopted by the committee. The sponsor said this bill allows the patient to be in charge of their health care. The bill prohibits an employer from requiring an employee from having a medical procedure. The sponsor introduced individuals who are affected by medical requirements such as the mask mandate, required COVID Testing, Etc. The sponsor said the intent of the bill is to include all private employers in this bill. Sen. Buxton expressed concern about the role this plays for employers. Sen. Kennedy said this bill does have exceptions for organizations that have certain requirements for employment, for example, employers requiring drug testing. The Utah Labor Commission voiced the need for further discussion. The Utah Retail Merchant Association and Utah Food Industry Association, the Associated Building Contractors, the Utah Medical Association, and the Salt Lake Chamber voiced opposition to this bill. Members of the public voiced support and opposition for this bill. The Utah Eagle Forum, the United Women's Forum and the Utah Defense Manufacturing community voiced support for this bill. Sen. Buxton voiced strong opposition to this bill.

Yeas: 4

Nays: 3

N/V: 1

Outcome: SB 208, as amended, passed out of committee with a favorable recommendation