



AN ACT ALLOWING A LOCAL FIRST RESPONDER ENTITY TO ESTABLISH A PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM; PROVIDING FOR MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF A LOCAL FIRST RESPONDER PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM; AND PROHIBITING A QUALIFIED PEER SUPPORTER FROM TESTIFYING ABOUT THE CONTENT OF A PEER SUPPORT SESSION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Local first responder peer support programs. (1) A police department, sheriff's office, fire department, or emergency medical service provider may establish a first responder peer support program that is in compliance with the provisions of this section.

(2) A local first responder peer support program must have a written policy that outlines, at a minimum:

- (a) qualifications for a peer supporter, including certification and continuing education requirements;
- (b) guidelines for what constitutes a peer support session from a conversation between peers;
- (c) definitions for a group debrief and peer support team;
- (d) the prohibition of recording in writing or by video or audio any peer support session;
- (e) how peer supporters in the program shall comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, 42 U.S.C. 1320d, et seq.;
- (f) the ability of an employee to use multiple peer supporters;
- (g) the protection of an employee from being forced to use a peer supporter who holds supervisory authority over the employee;
- (h) the prohibition of harassment or discrimination against an employee or volunteer who seeks services from the peer support program; and

- (i) confidentiality protections of the peer support program, including the following exceptions:
 - (i) if the employee has committed or plans to commit a crime;
 - (ii) if the employee indicates the employee will cause harm to themselves or to others;
 - (iii) if there is a request from an appropriate licensing board; and
 - (iv) if the mandatory reporting requirements of licensing boards apply.
- (3) A peer support session is confidential, and, except as provided in subsection (2)(i), a qualified peer supporter in a local first responder peer support program is prohibited from providing testimony about a peer support session, including individual and group peer support sessions.

Section 2. Codification instruction. [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 7, chapter 32, and the provisions of Title 7, chapter 32, apply to [section 1].

Section 3. Coordination instruction. If both Senate Bill No. 518 and [this act] are passed and approved, then the reference to "an appropriate licensing board" in [section 1(2)(i)(iii) of this act] must be changed to "an appropriate licensing board or program".

Section 4. Coordination instruction. If both Senate Bill No. 518 and [this act] are passed and approved, then the reference to "reporting requirements of licensing boards" in [section 1(2)(i)(iv)] must be changed to "reporting requirements of licensing boards or programs".

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
HB 621, originated in the House.

Chief Clerk of the House

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2025.

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2025.

HOUSE BILL NO. 621

INTRODUCED BY S. GIST, M. VINTON, S. KELLY, T. SHARP, C. SCHOMER, M. CUNNINGHAM, M. THIEL,
E. TILLEMANN, K. WALSH, J. ETCHART, D. BAUM, S. ESSMANN

AN ACT ALLOWING A LOCAL FIRST RESPONDER ENTITY TO ESTABLISH A PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM;
PROVIDING FOR MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF A LOCAL FIRST RESPONDER PEER SUPPORT
PROGRAM; AND PROHIBITING A QUALIFIED PEER SUPPORTER FROM TESTIFYING ABOUT THE
CONTENT OF A PEER SUPPORT SESSION.