



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; and
 - (ii) if the employee indicates the employee will cause harm to themself 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. TILLEMAN, K. WALSH, J. ETCHART, D. BAUM, S. ESSMANN

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