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TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE JARVIS JOHNSON RALLIES FOR SUPPORT OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION -HOUSE BILL 625, WHICH CALLS FOR A BI- ANNUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION FOR POLICE OFFICERS

April 26, 2018... HOUSTON, TX ... **Texas State Representative Jarvis Johnson pushes for support of the proposed legislation of House Bill 625. House Bill 625 outlines a proactive approach to stress management and the mental health of public safety employees, by requiring the bi-annual psychological testing of law enforcement officers.**

“In the wake of a consistent wave of discord, mistrust and , even more alarming and most intolerable- the growing number of deaths of unarmed citizens, at the hands of police officers, there has to be a solution. There must be a process of accountability and responsibility, whenever a life is taken. It can never be

acceptable to have “cracks” in the system or the process, in dealing with life or death situations. The only winning option is for both, the citizen and the officer to be alive at the end of a confrontation; and in the case where there was no other option than to use force, or even more so, if the final option is that a life was taken, there is no room for an excuse or a mistake, “ explains State Representative Johnson.

“ We have our police officers, in the field, whose job it is to protect and serve and we must remember that this is not an easy task. We have charged them to protect us, but remember that these same men and women, are human, plain and simple. We may equate them to Superman and Wonder Woman, but they are human. They deal with the sacrifice of making literal life or death decisions, as a job. When they wake up in the morning and kiss their children and their wives and husbands, as they walk out of the door , one of the last thoughts or words, every single day, for that family is – *PLEASE COME BACK HOME TO ME, ALIVE.* Other than first responders, there is no other profession where you are going to work and the thought that you may not make it home, as a way of life, is at the front of your mind, daily. They leave their homes and start their days with some of the worst situations, dealing with the worst individuals and outcomes, long hours, stressful professional lives, possibly stressful private lives... that is a lot to deal with, all by itself, “ says State Representative Johnson.

“ Then on the other side... Are there such things as “ bad police officers ” ? Absolutely! Are there racist police officers? Absolutely! Are there police officers out there with a set agenda , with “chips on their shoulders” ? Absolutely and Absolutely ! “ adds State Representative Johnson.

“ So now, herein, lies the problem and I have a solution. In a 2015 article, in the Texas Tribune, it was reported that Houston Psychologist- Carole Busick had vouched for the mental health of would-be police officers, without even meeting them. At that time, out of 4,000 applicants who went through the process to become police officers, Dr. Busick had not even seen half (only 1,800). So this means that just two years ago, we can confidently surmise that over 2,000 police officers were and still are policing our communities and we are completely unaware of what types of traumas they may have had in their lives, that may have compromised their mental health, prior to becoming officers. Even scarier is the number of other police officers, out policing our communities, that we do know,

that have been faced with the trauma of all sorts of situations, out in the field, whether it was domestic violence, drug related, traffic stops, etc and they have not had their mental health evaluated since they took their first L-3, when they signed up to be police officers, “explains State Representative Johnson.

“ This is why it is imperative that HB 625 gets the support that it needs to pass legislation. The best mental health, even more so than physical health, is required when dealing with the type of high pressured, easily volatile and life risking job that our officers deal with, from day to day,” explains State Representative Johnson.

“ This isn’t about putting anyone’s job at risk. This isn’t about not supporting the great men and women in our police departments, this is , on the contrary, a SUPPORT to them and in SUPPORT of them, “ adds State Representative Johnson.

“This bill acknowledges that we understand what an officer deals with. We thank them for risking everything to protect and serve us. Since they do their part, we want to do OUR part and PROTECT AND SERVE our officers,” explains Johnson. “We want to make sure that they are healthy, physically and mentally. We want to do whatever we can to make sure that when they are out on the job, in adverse situations and dealing with adverse personalities, that they have every resource to make sure that they keep the promise that they made to their children, to their parents, to their wives and to their husbands and return back home to them... ALIVE.”