

Landmark Legislation to Address Correctional Officer Mental Health Crisis

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, March 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On the anniversary of Federal Correctional Officer Blake Schwarz's passing, Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeks (IA-01) introduced [H.R. 2305](#), the Correctional Officer Blake Schwarz Suicide Prevention Act of 2025. This vital legislation addresses the urgent mental health crisis facing Bureau of Prisons (BOP) law enforcement officers.



The bill honors Officer Schwarz, a distinguished Federal Law Enforcement Training Center Academy graduate who tragically died by suicide. His death brought national attention to the severe mental health challenges confronting correctional officers, particularly at facilities like Thomson Federal Prison, where staff regularly face traumatic events and dangerous working conditions.

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We must dismantle mental health stigma. We must work to get our officers stronger care. We must work to help correctional officers understand that it's okay not to be okay.”

Jon Zumkehr

"Federal correctional officers work in some of the most dangerous and violent environments imaginable," said AFGE National President Everett Kelley. "Many of our BOP members are military veterans who have experienced staggering rates of PTSD and depression in recent years."

The legislation establishes a comprehensive framework that includes:

- Expanded mental health services and suicide prevention programs

- Confidential care integration with workplace health insurance
- Initiatives to reduce stigma around seeking mental health support

Michelle Schwarz, Officer Blake Schwarz's widow, endorsed the legislation: "I pray that not one

more officer feels there is no way out. To all officers, please utilize these resources. Your job is like no other. To everyone who made this possible, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I can't wait to show his little girl that her daddy is still making a difference in others' lives."

"Recent data underscores the legislation's urgency. Studies show correctional officers face suicide rates up to seven times higher than the national average in certain areas. At Thomson Federal Prison, multiple staff members have attempted suicide due to high-stress conditions, mandatory overtime, and insufficient mental health resources.", as cited by AFG 4070 President Jon Zumkehr.

"We must work together to help first responders receive better and stronger care in their place of work," said Haley DeGreve, Founder & President of The Gray Matters Collective. "We cannot wait for more people to die by suicide to care about this issue. The time is now for change."

Jon Zumkehr emphasized the broader implications: "The well-being of our correctional officers directly impacts prison safety and stability. We demand that Congress take immediate action and pass this bill."

Jon Zumkehr
AFGE 4070
+1 714-454-2661

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