

Dear Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

My name Carlos Estevez-Celi, I am family medicine resident physician practicing in Denver and a retired army combat medic with 2 tours of experience in Afghanistan. I am representing the Colorado Academy of Family Physician in asking for the committee's support on HB25-1176.

During my military service I was always an advocate of mental health initiatives to ensure my soldiers were taken care of after we came back home from taking care of our country.

I lead by example and would get evaluated by behavioral health after my tours.

After two combat tours as a combat medic and flight paramedic I was unsurprisingly diagnosed with PTSD. I followed through with my therapy, managed my symptoms, and today I have no issues taking care of my patients.

I have witnessed first hand the lives taken when individuals do not seek help because of the fear that the stigma associated with mental health will prevent them from progressing in their careers.

While in medical school I applied to become a medical officer for the army to continue serving my country. I had to disclose my history of PTSD. My history of PTSD rendered me ineligible despite it being controlled. My 10 year career in the military ended right there.

Had I know it would have been used against me I am not sure I would have sought help. I potentially would have ended up another statistic like some of my fellow soldiers.

I have too often heard colleagues in medical school and in residency forgo mental health treatment for fear of it costing them the career they dedicated their lives to.

As it stands Physician suicide rates are more than double that of the general public. Stigmatizing requirements like the current law contribute to that rate by discouraging physicians from seeking help.

This is an unnecessary and damaging requirement that can lead to irreparable harm to physicians, their families, and their communities.

As a resident, I have not had to worry about disclosing my past yet. With your support for this bill I hope that I will not have to open an investigations into my past that is irrelevant to my current ability to care for my patients. Thank you for your time.

*Carlos Estevez-Celi, DO*