

OSFA Legislative Resolution 18-4

WHEREAS, the medical and physical fitness of firefighters has traditionally been prioritized above emotional and or behavioral fitness in the Fire Service and,

WHEREAS, there is growing concern about behavioral health issues and its significant impact on the overall wellness of firefighters, their families and their co-workers, and,

WHEREAS, the IAFF and the IAFC as well as other Fire Service related organizations and institutions have, in recognition of the importance and growing need, developed new resources and tools designed to help members recognize the signs and symptoms and provide the best practices for addressing these issues.

WHEREAS, the stresses faced by firefighters throughout their careers in responding to incidents involving children, violence, and other potentially traumatic events as well as the inherent dangers associated with firefighting have been shown to have a cumulative effect on mental health and well-being and,

WHEREAS, research has demonstrated that firefighters who balance physical, behavioral, and emotional fitness have the best outcomes and,

WHEREAS, the instances of firefighter suicides, PTSD, substance abuse, and associated co-occurring disorders continue to increase in frequency each year and,

WHEREAS, these issues represent a risk to not only the individual firefighters and their families but also to the Oklahoma Fire Service at large as well as the Oklahoma Firefighters Pension and Retirement System and,

WHEREAS, more than 90 percent of Law Enforcement agencies in the United States use some form of pre-employment psychological screening of their applicants and,

WHEREAS, the Fire Service like Law Enforcement requires mentally competent and emotionally strong members to ensure the highest quality service to the citizens we serve, career satisfaction, family well-being, and adjustment to retirement and,

WHEREAS, the effectiveness of pre-employment psychological screening has been validated as accurate predictors of behavior over years of study by medical professionals as part of evaluating potential candidates and,

WHEREAS, this initiative unanimously passed the OFCA Conference in April

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the membership and Executive Board of the OSFA endorse and pursue by whatever means necessary a requirement for all paid career firefighting candidates to undergo a pre-employment psychological screening in addition to and in conjunction with the medical evaluation of applicants for entrance to the Pension System for the sole purpose of reducing the risk and burden of Fire Service occupational morbidity and mortality while improving the safety and effectiveness of firefighters operating to protect civilian life and property.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such pre-employment psychological screenings shall have minimum requirements to ensure that all candidates are mentally, behaviorally, and psychologically capable of performing required duties, and reduces the risk of occupational injuries, illness, and disorders, which has direct impacts on the well being of the candidate, members of the Pension System, the Pension System itself, and the general civilian population.

Respectfully Submitted:

OFCA Executive Board/OSFA Members in Good Standing

April 9, 2018