

June 2, 2003

Honorable Martha Escutia, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Room 2187
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 960 – CO-SPONSOR and SUPPORT


Dear Senator Escutia:


The Riverside Sheriffs' Association, which represents over 2,000 rank and file Deputy Sheriffs, Deputy Probation Officers, District Attorney Investigators, and Deputy Coroners – the entire law enforcement team of the County of Riverside - is pleased to co-sponsor and support AB 960.

There is not currently in law an established public safety officer-peer supporter privilege, similar to support systems found in other demanding professions.

Specifically this legislation establishes an evidentiary privilege for communications between a public safety officer and a peer supporter. The privilege is not to be used to impede efforts to address serious misconduct, for the bill creates exception to the privilege if the peer supporter is sought following commission of a crime. The bill makes conforming cross-references to the Peace Officer Bill of Rights, defines the new term, "peer supporter," and creates a new privilege that encourages public safety officers to avail themselves of confidential counseling. An officer, who hesitates to contact a psychologist, psychiatrist, or licensed clinical social worker, may more readily avail himself or herself of a peer supporter, someone who has been trained by POST. This Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training offers more familiarity with an officer's life style and its pressures. A peer supporter may thus gain the confidence of the officer and be a source of support should the officer seriously need a further push to a full mental health professional program.

Very truly yours,


Pat McNamara
President


Timothy H. B. Yaryan
Legislative Counsel and Advocate

cc: RSA