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## OLR Bill Analysis

### HB 5279

#### ***AN ACT ADDING WITNESSING A SERIOUS PHYSICAL INJURY AS A QUALIFYING EVENT FOR PURPOSES OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURY WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill expands the range of “qualifying events” that allow employees to qualify for workers’ compensation benefits for a post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI). Current law generally limits these qualifying events to witnessing events involving someone’s death (for example, witnessing a death or an injury that subsequently led to death) or traumatic physical injury that results in their loss of a vital body part or function that results in permanent disfigurement.

The bill allows an employee to qualify for PTSI benefits by witnessing someone’s serious physical injury that does not result in their death or loss of a vital body part or function that results in their permanent disfigurement. Under the bill, a “serious physical injury” is a physical injury that creates a substantial risk of death, or causes serious disfigurement, serious impairment of health, or serious loss or impairment of a bodily organ’s function. As under the law for other PTSI benefits, to qualify:

1. the employee must witness the serious physical injury in the line of duty or in the course of employment;
2. a qualified mental health professional must diagnose the employee with PTSI as a direct result of witnessing the injury; and
3. the PTSI cannot be due to a disciplinary action, work evaluation, job transfer, layoff, demotion, promotion, termination, retirement, or similar action.

The bill's PTISI benefits for witnessing a serious physical injury are subject to the same limitations and procedures that apply to other PTISI benefits. Among other things, these (1) cap the benefits' duration at 52 weeks; (2) prohibit the benefits from being awarded more than four years after the qualifying event; and (3) require that employers contest a claim for PTISI benefits through a process that is generally similar to the one used for contesting other workers' compensation claims, although with different deadlines.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Labor and Public Employees Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 9 Nay 4 (03/12/2026)