

**Action Requested/Required:**

- ☒ Vote/Action Requested
☐ Discussion or Presentation Only
☐ Public Hearing
Report Date: _____
Hearing Date: _____
Voting Date: _____

Department: Administration **Presenter(s) & Title:** Billy Peppers, City Manager
Amy Thomas, Human Resources Manager

Agenda Item Title:

Discussion and possible action to approve a resolution to join GIRMA Fund C and thereby offer PTSD benefits to eligible first responders to comply with HB 451, The Ashley Wilson Act.

Summary:

HB 451, known as the Ashely Wilson Act, takes effect January 1, 2025 and requires agencies in the State of Georgia to provide specific critical illness and long-term disability benefits for first responders diagnosed with occupational post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) arising from their work for Georgia agencies. For the City of Canton, eligible employees for this coverage will be sworn police personnel.

As the City of Canton is an existing member of GIRMA (Georgia Interlocal Risk Management Association), we must establish this resolution in order to join the additional GIRMA fund (Fund C, established 9/1/24) which will provide the required benefits under the Ashley Wilson Act.

The cost to the City of Canton will be determined based on the most recent census data at the time of billing.

Budget Implications:

Budgeted? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A

Total Cost of Project: \$ 7,696.00 Check if Estimated ☒

Fund Source: General Fund ☒ Water & Sewer ☐ Sales Tax ☐ Other: _____

Staff Recommendations:

Staff recommends approval to join GIRMA Fund C to comply with HB 451, the Ashley Wilson Act.

Reviews:

Has this been reviewed by Management and Legal Counsel, if required? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Attachments:

Resolution and Appendix A (Fund C Election Form for Existing GIRMA Members)
GIRMA First Responder PTSD Application and Participation Agreement and Proposal for Coverage

**A RESOLUTION TO ADD MEMBERSHIP IN A FUND OF GEORGIA INTERLOCAL RISK
MANAGEMENT AGENCY (GIRMA)**

WHEREAS, the City of Canton, located in Cherokee County, Georgia ("the City") is a current member of the Georgia Interlocal Risk Management Agency (hereafter GIRMA), an interlocal risk management agency formed pursuant to Chapter 85 of Title 36 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated; and

WHEREAS, the governing authority of the City is currently a member of a GIRMA Fund and desires to add membership in an additional GIRMA Fund; and

WHEREAS, the governing authority of the City has reviewed the Fund Election Form attached as Appendix A and the Application and Participation Agreement applicable to the Fund and finds that it is in the best interest of its residents for the City to be a member of the Fund indicated on the Fund Election Form;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the governing authority of the City of Canton:

1. The Mayor of the City of Canton is authorized to act on behalf of the City to elect membership in the Fund identified in the Election Form attached as Appendix A by executing the Application and Participation Agreement for such GIRMA Fund.
2. The Mayor of the City of Canton is designated as the City's representative to GIRMA for purposes of Fund participation.
3. The City of Canton may change its representative by making a written request to Georgia Municipal Association, Inc., the Program Administrator for GIRMA
4. This resolution shall be effective on the date of adoption.

Adopted this _____ day of _____, 20____ in Canton, GA.

By: _____,
[Bill Grant, Mayor]

Attest: _____,
[Annie Fortner, City Clerk]

APPENDIX A

Georgia Interlocal Risk Management Agency ("GIRMA") Fund C Election Form for Existing GIRMA Members

As stated in Section 6.1 of the Intergovernmental Contract, a GIRMA member must participate in at least one Fund established by the GIRMA Board of Trustees. The Intergovernmental Contract and GIRMA Bylaws apply to all GIRMA members, regardless of the Fund or Funds in which they participate. Terms and conditions specific to a Fund are set forth in the Coverage Description for the Fund.

This election form is for use by current GIRMA Members who wish to join GIRMA Fund C and thereby offer PTSD Benefits to eligible First Responders.

Fund C Application Information: GIRMA established Fund C on September 4, 2024. Fund C will provide fully- insured lump sum benefits and disability benefits for first responders entitled to such benefits under the Ashley Wilson Act. A coverage description for Fund C has been filed with the Georgia Department of Insurance and will be made available to Fund C members after approval of membership in Fund C by Georgia Municipal Association, Inc., the Program Administrator for GIRMA, and the insurance carrier.

To join Fund C, the governing body of the GIRMA Member must adopt a Resolution to Add Membership in a GIRMA Fund and the individual authorized to serve as the Public Entity's primary contact for Fund participation must complete and sign the First Responder PTSD Application and Participation Agreement. Membership in Fund C is effective when the Application is approved by the Program Administrator and the carrier.

**GEORGIA INTERLOCAL RISK MANAGEMENT (GIRMA)
FIRST RESPONDER PTSD APPLICATION AND PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT**

Employers eligible to participate in GIRMA (hereinafter a “Participating Employer” or “Employer”) shall complete this Application and Participation Agreement in order to purchase First Responder PTSD coverage fully insured by MetLife under the GIRMA Fund C Master Policy for a Lump Sum PTSD Diagnosis Benefit, a PTSD Disability (Income Replacement) Benefit, or a Combined Lump Sum PTSD Diagnosis Benefit and PTSD Disability (Income Replacement) Benefit. Once approved by GIRMA’s Program Administrator, the Participating Employer will receive a one-page Summary of Benefits identifying the purchased coverage(s) (the “First Responder PTSD Policy”) and a link to the Policy Certificate for the purchased coverage(s), so it may make these available to individuals performing service for them as an employed or volunteer “First Responder” as defined below (“First Responders”).

Who Does What?

- GIRMA is the Policyholder of a First Responder PTSD Policy insured by MetLife, which provides a Lump Sum Benefit and a Disability (Income Replacement) Benefit. These coverages together are designed to meet the requirements of the Ashley Wilson Act (the “Act”), effective January 1, 2025.
- Georgia Municipal Association, Inc., (“GMA”) is the Program Administrator for GIRMA. GMA uses information from the First Responder census data provided by the Participating Employer to bill for the premiums due under the First Responder PTSD Policy and maintains (either directly or through the broker for the First Responder PTSD Policy) Participating Employers’ Application and Participation Agreements.
- Participating Employers are responsible for providing census data to GMA’s broker that identifies all First Responders (as defined below) performing first responder services for them, classifying the First Responders by statutory definition and as employed or volunteer, and identifying those First Responders who are First Responders for another Public Entity.
- Participating Employers are responsible for submitting complete and accurate census data and paying premiums to GMA, communicating with First Responders about the coverages the Employer provides, providing the Summary of Benefits and link to the applicable Certificate to First Responders, and providing all requested information and documentation requested by GMA’s broker to ensure the census is current.
- Participating Employers are responsible for designating an authorized member of human resources staff to receive inquiries from MetLife related to work requirements or work status for disability claims and provide all information requested by MetLife for that purpose.
- To comply with the confidentiality provisions of the Act, GMA and its broker will not inform Participating Employers whether a First Responder has submitted a claim for benefits or received any such benefits.
- Participating Employers are responsible for ensuring that any information in their possession related to claims, and any other information that would reasonably identify an individual as having been diagnosed with PTSD, is used only in accordance with applicable laws and is kept confidential in the same way as mental health information related to an employer sponsored major medical plan or employee assistance program.
- Participating Employers are prohibited by law from taking any employment action solely as a result of a First Responder’s diagnosis, claims, or benefits.
- MetLife evaluates claims and pays approved claims under the First Responder PTSD Policy. All claims for benefits must be submitted to MetLife.
- First Responders do not need to inform the Participating Employer that they are making a claim.
- Neither GIRMA nor GMA have any role in claim determination or payment.

Definition of First Responder. A First Responder for the Participating Employer is an individual who meets one or more of the following definitions as a result of services he or she performs for the Participating Employer as an employee or volunteer:

- (A) 'Communications officer' as defined in Code Section 37-12-1;
- (B) 'Correctional officer' as defined in Code Section 45-1-8;
- (C) 'Emergency medical professional' as defined in Code Section 16-10-24.2;
- (D) 'Emergency medical technician' as defined in Code Section 16-10-24.2;
- (E) 'Firefighter' as defined in Code Section 25-4-2;
- (F) 'Highway emergency response operator' as defined in Code Section 45-1-8;
- (G) 'Jail officer' as defined in Code Section 45-1-8;
- (H) 'Juvenile correctional officer' as defined in Code Section 45-1-8;
- (I) 'Peace officer' as defined in Code Section 35-8-2;
- (J) 'Probation officer' as defined in Code Section 45-1-8; and
- (K) Law enforcement officer with the Department of Natural Resources.

Employer Obligations:

- Employer shall not require any kind of contribution from First Responders for the coverage(s) provided under the First Responder PTSD Policy.
- Employer is solely responsible for identifying all First Responders (as defined above). Any questions about First Responder status should be resolved by contacting legal counsel. Participating Employers that are members of GIRMA's Property and Liability Fund may call the GIRMA HelpLine at 800-721-1998 for free legal advice about whether an individual meets the statutory definition.
- Employer is solely responsible for keeping an accurate list of all First Responders, and providing correct and complete information to GMA's broker.
- Employer shall submit initial First Responder census data to the GMA broker in the form requested, and must update this census data as requested in order to ensure that all First Responders are properly identified and classified.
- The Employer's cost for coverage under the First Responder PTSD Policy will be based on the most recent census data at the time of billing.
- Employer shall provide the Summary of Benefits and a link to the applicable Certificate to all First Responders at no charge, and shall provide a copy of the applicable Policy to First Responders upon request.
- If the Policy is terminated for any reason, Employer shall provide notification of termination to all First Responders.
- Whenever requested to do so by MetLife or GMA, Employer shall provide MetLife or GMA the information requested.

Benefits Exempt from Income Tax:

- MetLife has determined that benefits it will pay under the policy are not subject to state or federal income taxation. Accordingly, MetLife will not report benefits to the IRS or withhold any amounts from benefit payments.
- MetLife will advise benefit recipients that benefits are not subject to federal or state income tax, so MetLife will not withhold taxes or provide a 1099 or W-2 or report benefit payments to the IRS. MetLife will remind benefit recipients that the benefits may offset other benefits received by the recipient or have other tax consequences and encourage them to consult their tax advisor for guidance.
- MetLife will provide a summary of benefits to the benefits recipient upon request.
- Legal counsel to GIRMA has advised GIRMA of the following:

- The Ashley Wilson Act provides that benefits payable pursuant to the Ashley Wilson Act are not subject to Georgia income tax.
- Benefits payable under the policy to First Responders (as defined in the statute) are not subject to federal income tax because the Ashley Wilson Act is a statute in the nature of a workers' compensation act under Treas. Reg. Section 1.104-1(b) and the MetLife policy bases benefits solely on diagnosis of work-related injuries or sickness as described in the Act.
- Participating Employers have no tax obligations arising from payment of benefits to their First Responders.
- A copy of the opinion letter is available upon request.

Information Privacy and Security:

- See the attached PTSD Privacy Notice, which will be posted on the website where policy information is published. This Notice explains the privacy requirements of the Ashley Wilson Act and how individually identifiable information is used and shared.
- As a critical illness and disability policy, the PTSD Program is not subject to the federal information privacy and security law that applies to group health plans (HIPAA). However, GMA, the GMA broker, and MetLife protect individually identifiable information and use and share it only in accordance with the privacy provisions of the Ashley Wilson Act and any other applicable privacy laws.
- Participating Employers will provide census data to GMA's broker using a secure portal established by the broker.

Desired Coverage (See Attached Proposal for Estimated Annual Premiums):

Participating Employer is applying for and agreeing to purchase the First Responder PTSD Combined Lump Sum Diagnosis Benefit and PTSD Disability (Income Replacement) Benefit unless the following option is checked.

_____ First Responder Lump Sum PTSD Diagnosis Benefit Only* (*Alone, this coverage does NOT meet the requirements of the Ashley Wilson Act. Leave BLANK if you want the full coverage.*)

The coverage elected above automatically renews at each anniversary of the effective date, based on then current premiums established by the Program Administrator. Coverage may be terminated in accordance with the GIRMA Bylaws regarding termination of membership in a GIRMA Fund.

**On behalf of _____ [Name of Participating Employer], _____
County, Georgia, I submit this Application and Participation Agreement and agree to its terms.**

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____ Title: _____



GMA - GIRMA Georgia First Responder PTSD Program Proposal for Coverage

Effective Date: January 1, 2025

Anniversary Date: January 1

Member: City of Canton

Member Number: 0000037

Insurer: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife)

There are two coverage components required by House Bill 451 (2024) effective January 1, 2025:

- 1) Lifetime Critical Illness Lump Sum PTSD Diagnosis Benefit
- 2) Lifetime Long-Term PTSD Disability Benefit (Income Replacement)

The GMA-GIRMA Critical Illness Lump Sum PTSD Diagnosis Benefit and Long-Term Disability (Income Replacement) coverage components are designed to comply with House Bill 451 when purchased together. However, a city is permitted to purchase only one component if you have existing coverage that complies with the new law.

Estimated annual premiums are based on the Eligible First Responder census data provided by the city. While the premiums below are estimated annual amounts, the city will be billed on a semiannual basis in an amount that reflects the city's updates to the census.

Component 1: Lump Sum PTSD Diagnosis Benefit –		
All First Responders		
Lifetime Benefit per first responder:	\$3,000	(Mandated Limit)
Lump Sum PTSD Diagnosis Benefit - Estimated Annual Premium for All First Responders:		\$2,392.00

Component 2: PTSD Disability Limit		
Employed First Responders		
Monthly benefit:	60% of pre-disability first responder earnings	
Maximum monthly benefit per first responder:	\$5,000	
Estimated Annual Premium for Employed First Responders:		\$5,304.00
Volunteer First Responders		
Monthly Benefit per first responder:	\$1,500	
Estimated Annual Premium for Volunteer First Responders:		\$0.00
PTSD Disability Limit – Estimated Annual Premium for All First Responders:		\$5,304.00

Estimated Annual Premium for Components 1 & 2:		\$7,696.00
Lump Sum PTSD Diagnosis Benefit and PTSD Disability Benefit		

This proposal is valid for 30 days after proposal is issued or until the effective date, whichever is later.
This overview is not a part of the policy(ies) and does not provide or explain all provisions of the policy(ies).

11/4/2024



Optional Limits for Consideration:

The coverage limits reflected for Lump Sum PTSD (\$3,000) and PTSD Disability Benefit (60% of earnings for employees and \$1,500/month for volunteers) on Page 1 of the Proposal for Coverage reflect the mandated amounts required by HB 451. However, if your city would like to purchase additional limits above the mandated amounts, the pricing is outlined in the table below. You can select a higher limit for Lump Sum PTSD only, a higher limit for PTSD Disability only, or a higher limit for both coverages. To elect a higher limit, please check the box beside the chosen limit(s).

***If you do NOT want to elect a higher limit, you can disregard this form. If optional limits are not selected, coverage will default to the minimum required limits in HB 451.**

In order to bind coverage for this program (mandated OR optional limits), the executed Application and Participation Agreement as well as the enrollment documents are required.

Lump Sum PTSD Diagnosis Limit	Total Premium Cost at Higher Limit	Check to increase limit
\$5,000	\$8,216.00	
\$10,000	\$9,568.00	
\$15,000	\$10,920.00	

PTSD Disability Benefit (Class 2 Volunteers ONLY)	Total Premium Cost at Higher Limit	Check to increase limit
\$2,000	\$7,696.00	

This document must be signed and returned to Lockton at gfrptsd@lockton.com for the higher limits to be effective.

City Name: _____

Name of Authorized City Employee: _____

Title of Authorized City Employee: _____

Signature of Authorized City Employee: _____

Date: _____

This proposal is valid for 30 days after proposal is issued or until the effective date, whichever is later.
This overview is not a part of the policy(ies) and does not provide or explain all provisions of the policy(ies).

11/4/2024

Privacy Notice for Georgia First Responders PTSD Program

This Privacy Notice describes the individually identifiable information about First Responders that Program Administrators of the Georgia First Responders PTSD Program collect and how it is used and shared.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS: Certain employees of Georgia Municipal Association (“GMA”) and Association County Commissioners of Georgia (“ACCG”) provide administrative services for the PTSD Program. The Southeastern Series of Lockton Companies, Inc. serves as broker for the MetLife insurance policy that is offered through the PTSD Program. GMA, ACCG, and Lockton are all Program Administrators of the PTSD Program.

PRIVACY OBLIGATIONS UNDER ASHLEY WILSON ACT: The Ashley Wilson Act contains privacy requirements for information that “could reasonably be used to identify individuals making claims or who have made claims or who have received benefits.” These privacy requirements were included because federal privacy law (HIPAA) does not apply to the Program. Program Administrators and MetLife treat this information as “sensitive mental health information” and only use and share the information to operate the Program, prepare aggregated reports, comply with the law, or as authorized by the First Responder.

Communications between First Responders (or their representatives) and Program Administrators or MetLife are confidential and privileged.

The Act ensures that First Responders can get the lump sum benefit in a confidential manner similar to receiving mental health benefits under a group health plan (subject to HIPAA) or under an employee assistance program, and limits interactions with the employer for disability benefits to those allowed for other mental health disability benefits.

- First Responders submit their claims for benefits directly to MetLife and do not need to inform the Employer.
- MetLife will not inform Program Administrators of claims or benefits without the First Responder’s express authorization.
- MetLife and Program Administrators will never tell Employers whether a First Responder has made a claim for or received a lump sum benefit (without express authorization).
- For the disability benefit, MetLife will only communicate with a human resources contact at the Employer about work requirements and work status, which will indicate that the First Responder has submitted a claim for disability benefits.
- Due to the nature of the Program, MetLife does not need to and will not provide any reports of benefits to the IRS or the Employer.
- If an Employer learns of a claim or benefits from the First Responder or otherwise,

the Employer is prohibited by law from taking any employment action solely as a result of a First Responder's diagnosis, claims, or benefits.

- Employers are required to treat any information they may learn about claims or benefits confidentially as they would treat mental health information associated with a group health plan or employee assistance program.
- Employers are required to designate an employee who is authorized to securely submit eligibility information about First Responders to the Program Administrators' eligibility portal. This information identifies which employees and volunteers meet the definition of First Responder and does not contain any information about claims or benefits.

PROTECTED INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION MAINTAINED BY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS; USE AND SHARING

Eligibility Data: A designated representative of each Employer that offers the Program securely submits the following information to the eligibility portal twice a year: **first and last name, social security number, date of birth, type of First Responder (by statutory definition), and employed or volunteer status.** This information is used to ensure proper billing of premiums and is securely shared with MetLife to enable MetLife to validate identity and determine eligibility for benefits when First Responders submit claims. To comply with the Act's privacy requirements, MetLife will NOT check with the Employer to determine eligibility when a claim is made.

Information Provided by First Responder: If a First Responder contacts a Program Administrator with questions about the Program, the Program Administrator may collect individually identifiable information necessary to answer the questions or direct the First Responder to the right resource and otherwise communicate with the First Responder. This information may include name, phone number, email, employer, employment status, and other information shared by the First Responder. This information is used to answer the questions and may be shared with other Program Administrators or MetLife as appropriate for answering the question and for customer service purposes.

Information About First Responder Claims or Receipt of Benefits: Program Administrators do not have access to information about whether a First Responder has submitted a claim for benefits or has received benefits unless the First Responder shares that information with the Program Administrator(s). MetLife is prohibited from sharing individually identifiable information about claims and benefits with the Program Administrators without an express written authorization from the First Responder. However, Program Administrators may learn about claims or benefits from a First Responder or someone acting on behalf of the First Responder. Program Administrators may share this information with other Program Administrators and MetLife as they deem appropriate for the operation of the Program.

Reports that Do Not Include Direct Identifiers: Program Administrators may request reports from MetLife that show use of benefits for purposes of evaluating the Program. These reports will not contain names or other direct identifiers. However, the reports may contain information (such as type of First Responder and geographic location of employer) that could be used with other information to identify individuals. These reports will be used as the Program Administrators deem appropriate for the operation of the Program and may be shared among the Program Administrators and with MetLife. Reports that could reasonably be used to identify an individual shall not be shared except as required by law.

PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

The Program Administrators and MetLife have privacy and information security policies and procedures and safeguards designed to ensure that individually identifiable information is protected from unauthorized access, misuse, and destruction. These controls are designed to meet a variety of applicable laws. For more information about MetLife's privacy practices, refer to the MetLife Privacy Notice posted on GFRPTSDInsurance.com.