

Dear Minnesota House of Representatives,

I am writing this letter in opposition to HF1234/SF1959. As a former police officer with over 25 years of experience as a police officer in Minnesota who has been struggling with PTSD, this bill will be detrimental to me, my family, along with past, current, and future law enforcement officers.

Just over two years ago, I was involved in a very stressful critical incident, including a lengthy high-speed dangerous police chase that ended with gunfire. I was put into a situation where I not only had to save my partner's life but mine as well, and I was forced to discharge my weapon and kill the person I was chasing. Unlike TV and the movies, the use of lethal force created several issues that I never wanted to deal with in my career. I suffered nightmares, sleepless nights, bad dreams, anger, frustration, anxiety, loss of inhibitions, and feelings of worthlessness, for starters. This incident was affecting my work, my family, and my overall health. I began to seek help and was diagnosed with PTSD. I continued to see a therapist and attempted to work through my symptoms for almost a year before I finally had to throw in the towel and remove myself from the profession that I absolutely loved. The healing process is something that I continue to work through, but no amount of therapy will ever change the fact that I had to take a human life.

As I continue to try and heal and put time between my traumatic event, every time I have to talk about my incident, hear about similar incidents, or read proposed new legislation that will affect my duty disability, it triggers my traumatic event and keeps it fresh in my mind which is detrimental to the healing process.

Creating offsets for all individuals receiving a duty disability benefit will result in significant financial hardships for disabled individuals who rely on these benefits to cover their basic living expenses. These individuals may already be struggling to make ends meet due to their disabilities, and reducing their benefits could make it even more difficult for them to meet their needs. Additionally, creating offsets could discourage individuals from pursuing careers in fields that carry a high risk of injury or disability, as they may feel that their benefits will not provide adequate support if they become disabled. As you know, law enforcement is a very dangerous profession.

Furthermore, creating offsets could result in a reduction in the quality of care that disabled individuals receive. If disabled individuals are forced to rely on other sources of income, such as Medicaid or other social welfare programs, they may be unable to afford the best quality care available, which could negatively impact their health and well-being. By requiring individuals to reapply every year for benefits and if for some reason they are not approved based on one person's opinion, it would subject the member to lose out of their benefits, and health insurance coverage just is not right.

Overall, creating offsets for all individuals receiving a duty disability benefit could have serious consequences for disabled individuals and the quality of care they receive. Any changes to disability benefits should be carefully considered and take into account the needs and well-being of disabled individuals. Making this bill retroactive for people already approved will severely

impact their ability to continue healing. You are sending the message to our first responders that we do not care about the sacrifices they have made for their community.

To receive disability benefits or workers' compensation benefits, individuals must meet certain eligibility criteria and provide medical evidence to support their claims. They may also need to undergo assessments and provide regular updates on their condition. What you are trying to change with this bill will not help those individuals who have already gone through these assessments but will instead hinder their healing, and essentially, you are telling all first responders that we want and need you unless they become injured, then we are going to punish you for seeking help. Many first responders who are receiving a duty disability benefit are only receiving 60% of their salary.

We are in unprecedented times where it is becoming more and more difficult to hire, train, and retain good police officers who play a crucial role in maintaining law and order, protecting citizens, and ensuring public safety. Here are some reasons why we need police officers:

Crime prevention: Police officers help to prevent crime by patrolling communities, responding to calls for assistance, and investigating suspicious activity.

Law enforcement: Police officers enforce laws and regulations to protect citizens, property, and public order. They investigate and solve crimes, and bring offenders to justice.

Emergency response: Police officers are often the first responders to emergencies such as accidents, natural disasters, and acts of terrorism. They provide critical assistance in these situations, including directing traffic, administering first aid, and evacuating people from danger.

Community policing: Police officers work closely with members of the community to build trust and cooperation. They engage in community outreach and education and collaborate with citizens and other stakeholders to identify and address local issues.

Public safety: Police officers help to ensure public safety by maintaining order, regulating traffic, and responding to emergencies. They also help to protect vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and victims of domestic violence.

Overall, police officers are an essential part of our society, and their role in protecting public safety and enforcing the law is critical to maintaining a peaceful and just society we need your support more than ever.

I don't disagree that there should be some reform to the first responder duty disability statutes, but you should not be punishing those of us who have served. This bill should not be made retroactive and should not require first responders to be required to reapply for benefits every year.

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