

Ref:

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Proposed HF1234

Impact on Current Duty Disability Recipients

My name is Nick Weidner, and I currently work as a licensed mental health psychotherapist, providing mental health services, focusing on trauma and addictions. I am also a retired Police Officer, and retired in 2013. During that time, I had already begun making life changes to address my own mental health, and the scars from some of the calls for service-traumatic in nature- Ultimately, it was the recommendation of my therapist to leave the profession of law enforcement, in order to heal.

I went back to school, was accepted into a Doctoral program for Psychology, and began working with my Masters degree. My motivation was to help other injured Officers- because during my work as a police officer, finding a therapist I trusted was extremely difficult. I completed school and training, and now work as a licensed therapist helping those who serve us.

The hardest decision of my lifetime was leaving the profession of being a Police Officer. I had grown up looking up to police officers, had deep respect for the officers in my community, and I was fortunate to eventually become an officer, working at three metro police departments, and working alongside my heroes. These professionals, put themselves second, and victims always first. There is a cumulative traumatic affect of having PTSD and being re-exposed to the predominate stressor(s). Many officers, like myself, had no other choice. At the time, little emphasis was given for the treatment of officers with the PTSD diagnosis. The disability benefit helped me become a therapist, and now give back and help wounded officers and emergency services personnel either continue in their work, or move on and heal. It is well known in my training as a trauma therapist, and supported by research, the importance of officers finding other work when they leave the profession. It remains an essential part of their treatment and the of their healing process.

In its current form, the legislation provides a disincentive for retired personnel to return to work with significant penalties. Currently, pension disbursements remain fixed, as inflation has increased the cost of living, making it absolutely essential for those retired to re-enter the workforce. This bill will dramatically change the lives of our wounded retiree's and of our families. As a therapist, it is an essential part of my clients treatment plan, for them to resume some type of work, and to build off of the progress, by experiencing a new identity- survivors of trauma. This bill, as it is written in its current form, will cause many to not seek re-employment in order to sustain their families and well-being, and will dramatically and negatively impact their healing process. I am asking to please amend this bill, and negotiate a more favorable outcome for those whose lives have been greatly affected by trauma.

Very Respectfully,
Nicholas W. Weidner, MA, LADC, LPCC
Psychotherapist/ Retired Police Officer