



Chair Frentz and members of the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement:

Our names are Joshua Magner and Chris Clark and we work at the Department of Public Safety as Deputy State Fire Marshal Investigators. We are writing today as proud members of Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) and asking you to support H.F. 4074/ S.F. 4276.

In addition to being the MSRS administrative proposal, H.F. 4074/ S.F. 4276 includes two important provisions affecting the MSRS State Fire Marshal plan. First, the bill fixes our individual pension plan participation, as we did not receive the required notice of an election for the early retirement benefit which we were entitled to under the statute. Second, the bill includes a procedural fix to the statute that automatically includes members hired as fire investigators after June 30, 2026 into the fire marshal retirement plan. This eliminates the need for employees to opt into the plan within 90 days of starting their employment, thereby avoiding special legislation like ours to restore the election opportunity for new hires in the future.

Deputy State Fire Marshal Investigators are responsible for assisting all fire departments and all levels of law enforcement within the state by proving origin and cause of fires. We serve Minnesotans by scientifically determining how fires started and assisting in the prosecution of those who use fire as a weapon against our citizens. We also help government agencies such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission identify and remove hazardous products from our store shelves.

This statute was created in recognition of this risk, and the high likelihood that some of our personnel do not live to normal retirement age. It is specific to investigative personnel, even within our division, because of the extensive exposure risks in our job duties. Recent studies show fire investigators have a 30 percent higher risk of cancer than the general public, and even higher risk than line firefighters due to the long-term exposures we face while doing our jobs. We spend hours digging through carcinogenic fire debris to discover what happened, so Minnesotans have a better chance of preventing fires.

We understand that passing this part of the legislation would require paying additional contributions to MSRS to make up the difference for the prior years of service. Although it is extremely frustrating that we now must pay a lump sum due to the agency's mistake, the early retirement benefit is important to us and our families. We appreciate the work by MSRS, the agency and the authors for working to correct this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. Please support H.F. 4074/ S.F. 4276.

Sincerely,

Chris Clark

Joshua Magner