



HCAPE

HENNEPIN COUNTY ASSOCIATION
OF PARAMEDICS AND EMTS

Chair Frentz and Committee Members,

On behalf of the labor union representing over 200 paramedics, EMTs, and EMT/EMDs of Hennepin EMS, I write to express our strong support for HF 139/SF 1122 and the proposed amendments to Minnesota Statutes section 356.415, which improve postretirement adjustments for members of the Public Employees Police and Fire Retirement Plan and the State Patrol Retirement Plan.

This legislation represents a necessary and long-overdue step toward strengthening retirement security for Minnesota's public safety professionals. By modestly increasing the post-retirement cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and reducing the waiting period for the initial adjustment from three years to one year, the bill better aligns retirement benefits with current economic realities. For retirees, particularly in periods of sustained inflation, these changes are not enhancements, they are essential protections against the erosion of purchasing power.

For over a decade, the PERA General Plan has provided higher COLA adjustments than the Police and Fire Plan, creating a clear and persistent disparity. In 2024 alone, inflationary pressures significantly outpaced benefit adjustments, with cost-of-living increases far exceeding the limited 3% cumulative post-retirement adjustments provided to retirees. Those who retired within the last three years have received no adjustment at all, placing them at an immediate financial disadvantage.

Compounding this issue, our members do not participate in Social Security and therefore lack access to the cost-of-living protections that many other retirees rely upon. The current structure places an inequitable burden on those who have spent their careers in physically and mentally demanding roles, often retiring earlier due to the nature of the work.

The bill's framework, including a structured COLA tied in part to Social Security adjustments and capped to maintain fiscal responsibility, reflects a balanced and sustainable approach. Additionally, improvements to the State Patrol Retirement Plan recognize the unique risks and demands placed on those professionals. Beyond fairness, strong retirement benefits are critical to workforce stability. EMS systems and public safety agencies across Minnesota are already facing recruitment and retention challenges. Ensuring that retirement systems remain competitive and reliable is essential to attract and retain the next generation of providers.

This legislation corrects longstanding inequities, supports those who have dedicated their lives to public service, and strengthens the long-term sustainability of Minnesota's public safety workforce. I respectfully urge your support for its passage.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to Minnesota's first responders.

Respectfully,

Shane Hallow
President
Hennepin County Association of Paramedics and EMTs