



THE HENNEPIN COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF PARAMEDICS AND EMTs
1325 WINTER ST, SUITE 102. MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55413

March 8, 2023

RE: HF 1234

Dear Chair Moller and Members of the House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee,

The Hennepin County Association of Paramedics and EMTs (HCAPE) is the exclusive representative of the paramedics and dispatchers of Hennepin EMS. Our members have provided 911 ambulance response to the citizens of Hennepin County since the inception of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Minnesota. As a result, our members have selflessly served and responded to many of the major events in the metro area, including the 35W bridge collapse, COVID-19 pandemic, and the civil unrest following the murder of George Floyd. Additionally, our members receive PERA P&F benefits.

As key stakeholders, who's members are directly impacted by the proposed changes, it is troubling that bill authors have failed to seek input from our organization and others. Furthermore, the input from the thousands of duty-disabled police officers, firefighters, and paramedics who are most impacted by the proposed legislation is absolutely necessary. Without that input, you are failing your duties as elected representatives.

I would like to highlight two key concerns with the proposed changes that I believe have the most impact on our membership, those seeking a PTSD duty disability, and those who are currently receiving benefits.

- The proposed legislation is a devastating blow to any duty-disabled paramedic, police officer, or firefighter who chooses to return to work in a new profession. Those who choose to start and new career are investing years of their lives and tens-of thousands of dollars to go back to school. The proposed language will cost many that time and money. In addition, it disincentivizes returning to the workforce in any capacity.
- The bill will further complicate and already complicated process of receiving an applying for PERA duty disability benefits based on a psychological injury. The uncertainty created by the new rules will only further add to the stress of those who are experiencing a mental health crisis.



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HCAPE is in support of improving access, funding, and implementation of mental health support services to prevent PTSD injuries. We appreciate awareness being brought on the topic and willingness to support first responders who are suffering from PTSD injury. Our members are exposed to the traumas of our profession daily and those exposures impact them without a doubt. We also acknowledge that early treatment and recognition of PTSD injury is known to mitigate permanent and disabling injury in certain situations. We want our members to receive the benefits that come with those improvements, and more. However, we do not believe improving funding and access needs to come at the expense of those who are seeking or are currently receiving PERA duty disability benefits.

I ask that the committee take these concerns into consideration and modify the proposed language to address the concerns. Key stakeholders need to have a voice in this matter and it is incumbent on this committee to seek input from those directly impacted by the proposed changes, including the exclusive representatives of those eligible for benefits and those currently receiving PERA duty disability benefits.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Shane Hallow

President

Hennepin County Association of Paramedics and EMTs