

March 7, 2022

***sent via email**

To: House Public Safety & Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Committee

Greetings Chair Mariani and Committee Members:

We are writing today in support of the goals of HFXXXX (Rep. Long) which would provide some assistance in addressing issues associated with public safety duty disability trends. The Rochester City Council adopted a legislative priority supporting the League of Minnesota Cities in efforts related to PERA duty disability presumption and health insurance costs and find that this bill is in alignment with that effort.

We understand that the bill would require treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) before an employee can file for a duty disability and/or workers' compensation and would modify benefits for people who recover partially or totally from a PTSD injury. The bill also fully reimburses employers for the cost of the continued health insurance benefit for disabled employees or dependents of those killed in the line of duty IF the employer has implemented mental injury prevention measures. The bill's requirement for training that "prepare peace officers for the stressful and traumatic events that are common to policing and teach officers methods to process and cope with the stress and trauma inherent to policing" is also a key component of the bill and issue. We do note that the 32 week treatment period may result in some temporary staffing challenges and look forward to opportunities to potentially engage further in discussions on that component of the bill.

In particular, we appreciate that the bill includes important preventive measures that will optimize wellness in public safety agencies like the Rochester Police Department, and provide tools to allow those to continue service in a profession they are passionate about. We support the goal of the bill to provide additional resources to take care of valued public safety employees who provide a core city service. The City of Rochester supports getting employees treated and back to work if possible. We acknowledge that the bill does not take benefits away from employees who become injured. There may also be an opportunity to improve community outcomes by reframing and refocusing efforts to prevent and cure PTSD, particularly as we look for additional tools in recruitment and retention of public safety officers.

We are a self-insured city and have seen the impacts of the current system of workers compensation and PERA duty disability claims related to PTSD in our police department and city operations. We fully support the key component of the bill: state funding for the continued health insurance benefit under Minn. Stat. § 299A.465.

Thank you for your consideration of this bipartisan bill,



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