

Finance Committee Senators-

I am a 26-year veteran of Law Enforcement who was FORCED to retire with a Duty Disability. I did not want to leave. This bill will negatively impact me in numerous ways if passed.

I will start with the mental health harm of this bill. I previously emailed numerous law makers, in part: "I understand the mental health issues myself and other disabled members have. I do not mean to sound alarmist, but I can guarantee there will be members who take their own life because of the stress and hopelessness for the future that this one issue will bring to bear on people who are simply trying to work to support their family."

IN RECENT WEEKS, WE HAVE HAD A DUTY DISABLED MEMBER TAKE HIS OWN LIFE AND ANOTHER WHO ALMOST DID THE SAME AND WENT TO THE HOSPITAL. IF YOU VOTE YES, YOU WILL CAUSE REAL HARM TO DUTY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS! IT IS UNBELIEVABLE TO ME THAT LAW MAKERS ARE AWARE OF THIS AND CONTINUE MOVING FORWARD WITH THIS BILL KNOWING THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS IT WILL HAVE ON DUTY DISABLED FAMILIES!

I ASK YOU TO IMAGINE VOTING FOR A BILL THAT WOULD DO THIS HARM TO ANY OTHER DISABLED COMMUNITY. I believe you would vote no. I ask you to vote no on SF1959 as well.

I want to highlight the fact that while PTSD is a "hidden" disorder for many, there are others who have physical problems and physical medical diagnosis as a result of PTSD. I am one of those people. I had to go to the ER via ambulance during the 2020 riots. The medics thought I had or was having a heart attack. I also had a sudden onset of dizziness that would not go away. I was tested for stroke as well. After months of tests with different doctors and specialists, I was diagnosed with a rare form of vertigo that is caused by migraine. This vertigo is permanent as far as anyone currently knows, and it impacts me daily. My heart problems the day during the riots, and the vertigo problems to this day, are both issues that are physical, measurable and identifiable. Both of the issues are attributed by doctors to my PTSD. This shows that PTSD can be much more than "simply" a mental health problem.

PERA claims disabled members CHOSE to be disabled for financial gain. THIS IS A LIE! First, DISABILITY IS NOT A CHOICE. Second, I HAVE LOST OVER HALF OF MY PENSION DUE TO BEING DISABLED. I have returned to the workforce to make up a SMALL portion of what I have lost, NOT for financial gain! There are provisions of this bill that will have significant financial impacts on those of us who have returned to the workforce.

I am in the workforce, paying taxes and contributing to our state. I am currently losing about \$8,000 per year of my disability benefit because my combined wage is "too much." Currently, PERA allows a re-employed member to earn 125% of the positional

wage they left. This 125% cap is my disability benefit and my new income combined. Once I pass the 125% threshold, PERA penalizes me by taking \$1 for every \$3 I earn. Despite this current penalty, there is enough of a benefit remaining to continue working.

WHAT I ALREADY PAY BACK TO PERA EACH YEAR IS MORE THAN WHAT MANY CURRENT MEMBERS PAY INTO THE FUND! PERA HAS LIED ABOUT THE NUMBERS AND YOU SHOULD ASK WHY!

PERA is proposing to move the wage cap to 100% of the positional wage AND THEN take EVERY dollar I make above that. Currently, that would make my penalty about \$47,000 per year. This means I would work for free for more than half the year. Because of this, myself and others will leave the workforce. It means no more \$8,000 going back to PERA (and no more taxes paid). In the end, the offset increase will mean that PERA will receive less offset dollars because people like me will simply no longer work. PERA funding is at a sustainable level, and these new offsets are ADMITTEDLY not needed for the health of the fund.

These statutes that govern duty disability, workers comp, re-employment penalties and medical insurance have been enacted over the years for specific reasons. This one bill would overturn all those issues at one time. At the very least, these separate and distinct issues should be hashed out in individual bills.

ADDITIONALLY, ANY NEW CHANGES SHOULD NOT BE RETROACTIVE TO DUTY DISABLED MEMBERS WHO HAVE ALREADY MET THE REQUIREMENTS AND MADE LIFE DECISIONS TO GO BACK TO WORK BASED ON THE STATUTES AS THEY WERE AT THE TIME OF THEIR INJURY. PERA, and some law makers, are saying that this bill will not be retroactive. That is a lie. The re-application language of this bill will put EVERY duty disabled member under the terms of this new legislation with the harmful offsets.

Please vote NO!

John Grove