

To Whom It May Concern:

I am reaching out today in anger, sadness, exhaustion, and quite honestly; **desperation** regarding HF1234 (that was already passed on the house floor), and **senate bill SF1959** that has now made its way to you.

I never thought this would make a difference, and it feels strange sharing such a personal and traumatic story with a stranger. *But, If I have learned anything in my short experience with these legislative bills, it's that strangers in positions like yours hold a lot of power over lives like ours.*

18 years ago, at 20 years old, my husband was hired as a police officer for a city in Scott County. We joke that before he could legally enjoy an adult beverage, he was a cop. Looking back, and now having children and more life experience of our own, he was just a kid. But, he was all in. This was his calling and what he wanted to do.

He is an incredible cop- one of the "good ones", per say. He is the type of officer that departments (and communities) strive to have. He has served his city and partners with the utmost pride, respect and commitment. He spent many years as a field training officer for new officers, along with being a use-of-force trainer. He recently spent a year at the high school as an SRO. He's done everything right- to a fault of utmost pressure on himself. A most recent favorite, as his wife, is when he would bring our 8-year-old daughter to events such as feeding the homeless & Shop with a Cop to ensure she understands the importance of serving the community and those in need. He's made a bigger difference in more lives than he will ever understand.

He is our hero, and we are beyond proud of him.

About two years ago, he started struggling with his mental health. Going to work was getting harder, and dealing with the traumatic day-to-day events of the job wasn't something he was able to just push aside. He started to deal with debilitating anxiety & frequent panic attacks. His symptoms started to get so out of control that he finally agreed to look into medication along with seeing a therapist. For two years, he struggled through multiple different types of therapy, medications, and quite honestly, denial. He hit many "rock-bottoms". **But beyond rock bottoms, he nearly took his life. His beautiful, successful, service-filled life was almost lost.**

He **refused** to accept this was 18 years of trauma and critical incidents coming to the surface, and refused to consider that it was no longer safe for him, his partners, or his community, to be serving them. He BEGGED for help, for guidance, but received nothing other than "this is the job, and it will continue to happen". Finally, more than two years after this began, he decided to save his life & his family. He was forced to make the absolutely heart-breaking step to accept his fate with PTSD (a very severe level). Our family has been through hell and back witnessing him suffer. He has been through hell and back fighting for not only his mental health, but his life.

This is not a choice he has made. This is just the hand we have been dealt. He has tried, endlessly, for YEARS to continue with the career, despite his diagnosis. He very simply cannot both heal & be a police officer for the 19th year, at the same time. It is time for him to *try* and heal without continuing the trauma that has caused the diagnosis.

Since HF1234 & SF1959 has been brought to our attention, the treacherous processes we are already going through have only worsened. *This bill will have great negative impacts on real families.* Families like ours. First responders who have been shot, been in car accidents, or mentally injured in the line of duty DEPEND on the benefits they so bravely EARNED. **It is the very least they deserve;** and this bill is taking that away.

I want to share my main concerns:

- The pension fund for police and fire is at the highest level it's been in many years. It is not depleted, nor depleting. *Please, I ask you to PLEASE look at the numbers. What is being shared outwardly is simply not true.*
- The financial offsets in this bill are **devastating**. Many have built their lives around the pension they have been promised, and PERA is taking that away. Would you work for free (or for .50 of every \$1)? Why should our first responders injured in the line of duty be doing this? Will my husband ever be able to work again without paying it all right back to PERA? He EARNED this benefit while being severely injured on duty. These first responders DESERVE the pensions they were promised. **Some families will be losing upwards of \$35,000 next year. On average, \$17,000. This is cruel.**
- These changes will account for approx. \$1.6 million dollars. Both authors of this bill, along with PERA, have agreed that this will NOT help bring the fund up. What is the point of this devastation? It is discriminatory, at best.
- PTSD is not a choice. **It is not curable.** I continue to hear the authors of this bill and some "stakeholders" say they are trying to "incentivize" people to stay in their jobs. My husband (and many others like him) cannot be INCENTIVISED OUT OF THEIR DIAGNOSIS. There may be some people that can return to work, but it is clear and simple that many cannot. **We should not be passing legislation that is forcing them to do so.** We cannot put mental health into a box on a bill. This is dangerous. We should be encouraging people that are struggling to get OFF the street, not to stay on. Would we ask our military veterans who suffer from PTSD (without question) to get back to war? Would we want them to? This isn't about a solution, or even about the people. Solutions mean early intervention. Robust mental health programs from the beginning for our first responders (beyond a once a year check-up-from-the-neck-up so the city can check their box and get their funds). Frequent psych evaluations to ensure everyone is at their healthiest. Stopping the cycle by supporting at the ON-SET, or before. Solutions are not forcing victims with PTSD to continue on with the very thing that caused it- so their city can save

money. Solutions are understanding the dangers behind first responders not coming forward and continuing to work.

- It is not fair to compare a duty disabled first responder to an active member as far as being "equal" in what someone can make as an income. When you are forced to go out on disability, you are making 60% of your high-five (not even of your current income). You do not get promotions, yearly raises, over-time pay, etc. Active members wages FLUX based on A LOT of factors...it is not simply just a base wage. Disability stays the same. Your re-employment earnings should NOT be compared to those that are still active, because you really cannot determine what you could have been making should you have been able to stay in the force.
- Whether or not you get "approved" for 24 weeks of treatment is up to the discretion of Executive Director of PERA, Dave Anderson. Is he in a position to decide whether or not someone should receive mental health treatment?
- Your job is **NOT PROTECTED**. After 6 months of PTSD treatment, a department is going to quickly ensure you are of liability to them, and get rid of you (like they do now). NOTHING in this bill stops that from happening. An employer is NOT required to hold your job any longer than the 12 weeks of FMLA. If you do get "approved" for the 24 weeks of treatment, return to work, and get into a shooting; who is liable? You? The City?

With the passing of HF1234/SF1959 first responders are just not going to get help at all. There are too many loopholes, too many obstacles, and too much **risk** to step forward. They will continue on in their career in LE (or other spaces), suffering silently.

This is attacking victims who have served our communities endlessly. To the point of nearly no return. As representative Cedrick Frazier, DFL-New Hope, said, it will "lighten the burden on cities and counties". Instead, we put the burden on these victims? The brave hero's that have swallowed their own pride and decided to be a part of a solution. A solution that entails giving up all they've ever known, their lives as they know it, their financial earnings, their callings, their careers: for the sake of their mental health, their life & their partners & communities safety.

John 15:13 says: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for another."

HF1234/SF1959 is not about our first responders, about mental health, or about anything other than one thing. There isn't one person in support of this bill that doesn't directly touch a BUDGET of the city and/or organization they represent. It is being unfairly and unjustly fronted as if it is a "mental health" bill, when it isn't.

Representative Her said it herself during the House Public Safety & Finance committee meeting when this bill hit the ground running, so I will leave you with a quote from the very author.

“What can we do to ensure that we come back to see if this bill is doing what it’s supposed to do? and if it’s not, and it’s still COSTING OUR EMPLOYERS A LOT OF MONEY”

**As this bill stands, it is about money. Something this state has a HISOTRICAL SURPLUS OF. What a price to pay to those who have given their whole lives for us.**

Please vote NO to SF1959: for the sake of families like mine, and so many others, who are living some of the worst days of our lives.

Thank you so much for your time.

Jordyn Kolar