

Hello I'm David Blackstock, a disabled police officer. I am writing today to oppose proposed legislation that will be attached to SF1959 via the house bill HF1234. This bill will financially punish currently disabled officers, further stigmatize mental health issues and put public safety at risk.

In October 2007, I was sworn in as a new police officer for the city of Mankato. Less than 7 weeks later, I responded to a home invasion where an intruder was trying rape and murder two college women. I didn't hesitate to try and save them as I was just promised I'd be taken care of if anything happened to me. A few minutes later, I'd be kneeling over a growing pool of blood, the suspect killed, the women were saved but I was battered.

I would physically heal in a few weeks and would return to duty. I received the medal of honor and the medal of valor for bravery.

I saw a therapist recommended by the police department, as I was having issues. This therapist told me I was fine and to go back to work.

Three years later, I'd be holding my duty pistol to my head with my partners begging me not to pull the trigger. I couldn't live anymore with what we had to do that day. I spent the next few months working with the best doctors in the industry and eventually would clear the psychological evaluation and was back at work.

Even with continued therapy and medication, I made it another 2 years before I was standing in front of a wanted man who was reaching for a shotgun on the wall. I didn't try to stop him, I was hoping he'd kill me.

In August 2013 the doctors forced me to retire, I didn't have a choice. I have struggled for the past 10 years to rebuild my life. Only just now am I getting close to earning what I would be as a police officer.

This bill would completely strip me of my disability benefit due to proposed reduction of allowed income and offset penalties. \$26,000 in take home income would be slashed over night. Losing \$2,200 a month would cripple my family financially and may even cost us our home.

For officers who are disabled and can go back to work, they will take home less than what they did as a police officer as their earnings will now be subject to social security and taxes vs non taxed disability income.

This will cause current officers to hide their PTSD in fear of being financially punished should they be forced to retire. This would clearly put public safety at risk.

This financial punishment would cause disabled members to not seek re-employment. It will stop their ability to improve their lives and rob our communities of people who love to serve and still have something to give.

This bill will break the promise that was made to me and thousands of other disabled officers who nearly paid the ultimate price. Please protect us and stop this bill.