

2025, February 7th

**To:** Members of the Minnesota House & Senate

**Subject:** Urgent Support for Funding Hometown Hero Outdoors (HHO)

Dear Minnesota Legislators,

I am writing to strongly urge your support for funding Hometown Hero Outdoors (HHO), an organization dedicated to providing outdoor-based mental health programs for military personnel, veterans, and first responders in Minnesota. HHO has profoundly impacted the lives of those who have served our country and communities by offering meaningful outdoor experiences that promote healing, connection, and well-being.

**As someone who supports Veteran and First Responder mental health efforts**, I have witnessed the life-changing impact these outdoor experiences have on participants. These programs provide more than just recreational opportunities—they offer healing, connection, restoration, and renewed purpose.

The mental health crisis among veterans, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS personnel is well-documented. Programs like HHO address this crisis in a proven and effective way:

- 73.8% of participants report “Excellent” mental health after their outdoor adventure.
- 75.4% experience a significant reduction in stress.
- 91.8% rate their experience as “Excellent.”

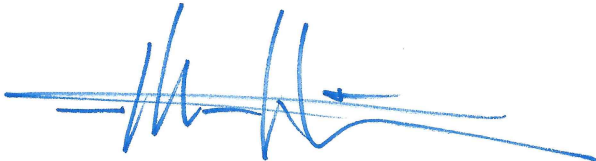
While HHO has been successful in securing funding through private sources, legislative support would allow us to serve even more Minnesotans, ensuring more of our heroes receive the benefits of these programs. This investment is not just about supporting those who serve—it’s also about strengthening Minnesota’s economy. Funding these initiatives means tax dollars go back into our state, supporting local businesses, outfitters, guides, mental health professionals and rural communities that benefit directly from these outdoor activities.

I respectfully urge you to advocate for and approve funding for these critical programs. Our heroes have given everything for us—it’s time we stand up and support them in return.

**The mission of restoring our Veterans and First Responders to their communities, families and themselves is a whole of Minnesota effort. We all need to do our part!**

Thank you for your time and dedication to Minnesota’s veterans, first responders, and military personnel. I appreciate your leadership and commitment to their well-being.

Rangers Lead The Way!



**MARK WIENS**

Colonel (Retired) U.S. Army

Representative (Retired) Minnesota State House



Committee Chair-

My name is Sally Mixon. I am the founder of a mental health program called Abijah's on the Backside, and I am asking on behalf of Hometown Hero Outdoors to consider bill SF 0674.

Why is this bill so important? If SF 0674 passed, this would allow Hometown Hero Outdoors to strengthen their team in becoming ASSIST trained (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) which would extend out to hundreds of military service members, veterans and first responders. This bill would also allow for Hometown Hero Outdoors to offer further mental health support through Abijah's when men and women in uniform require more in-depth care.

Why do Abijah's and Hometown Hero Outdoors work well together?

- At Abijah's, insurance is not taken and thus no diagnosis is required to receive help. This removes the barrier many of our first responders have in reaching out for support. Hometown Hero Outdoors allows bridges the gap as trusted nonprofit to assist those we serve and Abijah's.
- Abijah's clinicians are master level, licensed (or working towards licensure) mental health professionals who specialize in this very unique therapeutic approach.
- Because of this unique 'outdoor' therapeutic approach with horses, Abijah's is a perfect mental health program to come alongside the mission and vision of Hometown Hero Outdoors to serve those when a higher level of care is needed.

Thank you for your consideration

Sally Mixon, MA, Founder and CEO

2/7/2025

**To:** Members of the Minnesota House & Senate

**Subject:** Urgent Support for Funding Hometown Hero Outdoors (HHO)

Dear Minnesota Legislators,

I am writing to strongly urge your support for funding Hometown Hero Outdoors (HHO), an organization dedicated to providing outdoor-based mental health programs for military personnel, veterans, and first responders in Minnesota. HHO has profoundly impacted the lives of those who have served our country and communities by offering meaningful outdoor experiences that promote healing, connection, and well-being.

As someone who has been a part of this organization over the last 6 years I have first hand seen the growth in our members. Seeing someone on their first trip that has not had these opportunities in their life. Then online or in person hearing their story of how that one trip changed their outlook on life is humbling. So many of these men and women lose a part of themselves when they serve. I have witnessed the life-changing impact these outdoor experiences have on participants. These programs provide more than just recreational opportunities—they offer healing, connection, and renewed purpose.

The mental health crisis among veterans, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS personnel is well-documented. Programs like HHO address this crisis in a proven and effective way:

- 73.8% of participants report “Excellent” mental health after their outdoor adventure.
- 75.4% experience a significant reduction in stress.
- 91.8% rate their experience as “Excellent.”

While HHO has been successful in securing funding through private sources, legislative support would allow us to serve even more Minnesotans, ensuring more of our heroes receive the benefits of these programs. This investment is not just about supporting those who serve—it’s also about strengthening Minnesota’s economy. Funding these initiatives means tax dollars go back into our state, supporting local businesses, outfitters, guides, mental health professionals and rural communities that benefit directly from these outdoor activities.

I respectfully urge you to advocate for and approve funding for these critical programs. Our heroes have given everything for us—it’s time we stand up and support them in return.

Thank you for your time and dedication to Minnesota’s veterans, first responders, and military personnel. I appreciate your leadership and commitment to their well-being.

Sincerely,

**Mitchell D. Bollin**  
Gambling Manager

25820 Lofton Ave.

Chisago City, MN 55013

651-353-2242

2/7/2025

To: Members of the Minnesota House & Senate

Subject: Urgent Support for Funding Hometown Hero Outdoors (HHO)

Dear Esteemed Minnesota Legislators,

I am writing to earnestly request your support for funding Hometown Hero Outdoors (HHO), an organization that provides outdoor-based mental health programs for military personnel, veterans, and first responders in Minnesota. HHO has made a significant difference in the lives of those who have served our country and communities by offering meaningful outdoor experiences that foster healing, connection, and well-being.

As someone who has personally benefited from HHO, I can attest to the life-changing impact of their programs. When I needed support the most and the military wasn't there, HHO stepped in. During a time when life seemed bleak, HHO provided me with a much-needed connection to the outdoors and to like-minded individuals who understood my problems and struggles. These experiences offered me healing, connection, and a renewed sense of purpose.

The mental health crisis among veterans, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS personnel is well-documented. Programs like HHO address this crisis in a proven and effective manner:

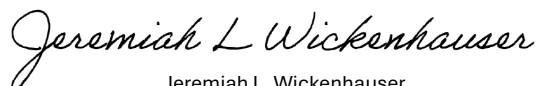
- 73.8% of participants report “Excellent” mental health after their outdoor adventure.
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While HHO has successfully secured funding through private sources, legislative support would enable us to serve even more Minnesotans, ensuring that more of our heroes receive the benefits of these programs. This investment is not only about supporting those who serve—it is also about strengthening Minnesota’s economy. Funding these initiatives means tax dollars are reinvested into our state, supporting local businesses, outfitters, guides, mental health professionals, and rural communities that benefit directly from these outdoor activities.

I respectfully urge you to advocate for and approve funding for these critical programs. Our heroes have given everything for us—it is time we stand up and support them in return.

Thank you for your time and dedication to Minnesota’s veterans, first responders, and military personnel. I appreciate your leadership and commitment to their well-being.

Sincerely,



Jeremiah L. Wickenhauser

CMSgt, MN ANG

133 CRF, NGB CR PROJO

Cell: 320-223-3277

To: MN House and Senate:

I am writing in support of Hometown Heros Outdoors. I am currently employed at Best Defense Armory and Range in Forest Lake MN and we partner with the HHO team of dedicated volunteers. I have attended numerous HHO fundraisers over the years and I am impressed with their mission and their work ethic. This group of men and women volunteers consistently go the extra mile for our men and women who serve our country in so many valuable positions. Veterans, First Responders and active service members all benefit in so many ways because of HHO and their efforts.

Our Veterans face so many challenges ranging from homelessness to mental health issues, PTSD, physical disability from injuries sustained on duty and even suicide. Unfortunately, many times this suffering goes unnoticed and frequently it goes untreated. Our first responders also suffer many of the same ailments as do current service members. HHO offers a healthy outlet for these men and women to enjoy the outdoors by participating in hunting and fishing experiences that can be and quite frequently are life changing. Civilian life can be challenging in many ways for these men and women. Having opportunities like this, which otherwise might not be probable or even possible, can ease the suffering caused by civilian life and also create new hobbies for them to enjoy. I personally have witnessed several testimonies by people that have been affected by HHO, and I am moved to tears most of every time. Listening to their experiences and seeing the joy on their faces when they tell their stories is quite memorable. Changing someone's life for the better after they have sacrificed so much for their country is a most honorable cause. As a retired law enforcement officer, I am proud to be associated with and partnered with Hometown Heros Outdoors. Their volunteers are a great group of dedicated people that are amazing to work with and everyone of them that I have come across has exemplified the noble cause behind their mission.

Funding programs like HHO will have a lasting impact on the men and women who serve our country. Programs like these tend to fall through the cracks far too often when it comes to receiving necessary funds to better the lives of American heroes. They need our support to be able to continue to support those who gave so much.

Respectfully,

Dave Kisch

Retired Law Enforcement Officer

Proud HHO Supporter

February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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As someone who ***has personally benefited from HHO, has seen the impact on a friend/family member, supports veteran/first responder mental health efforts***, I have witnessed the life-changing impact these outdoor experiences have on participants. These programs provide more than just recreational opportunities—they offer healing, connection, and renewed purpose.

HHO has given me the opportunity to meet other veterans and first responders throughout Minnesota. The Staff of HHO created a community and culture to bring veterans and first responders together and made me feel that I am not alone. I have seen the impact of this organization first hand with my cousin that is a veteran and myself as a first responder.

The mental health crisis among veterans, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS personnel is well-documented. Programs like HHO address this crisis in a proven and effective way:

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While HHO has been successful in securing funding through private sources, legislative support would allow us to serve even more Minnesotans, ensuring more of our heroes receive the benefits of these programs. This investment is not just about supporting those who serve—it’s also about strengthening Minnesota’s economy. Funding these initiatives means tax dollars go back into our state, supporting local businesses, outfitters, guides, mental health professionals and rural communities that benefit directly from these outdoor activities.

I respectfully urge you to advocate for and approve funding for these critical programs. Our heroes have given everything for us—it’s time we stand up and support them in return.

Thank you for your time and dedication to Minnesota’s veterans, first responders, and military personnel. I appreciate your leadership and commitment to their well-being.

Sincerely,

**Sergeant Anna Taylor**

**Saint Paul Police Department**

**Vice- Human Trafficking/ Missing Persons Unit**

**Minnesota Human Trafficking Investigators Task Force (MNHTITF)**

**367 Grove St.**

**Saint Paul, MN 55101**

**[Anna.Taylor@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Anna.Taylor@ci.stpaul.mn.us)**

February 07, 2025

**To:** Members of the Minnesota House & Senate

**Subject:** Urgent Support for Funding Hometown Hero Outdoors (HHO)

Dear Minnesota Legislators,

I am writing to strongly urge your support for funding Hometown Hero Outdoors (HHO), an organization dedicated to providing outdoor-based mental health programs for military personnel, veterans, and first responders in Minnesota. HHO has profoundly impacted the lives of those who have served our country and communities by offering meaningful outdoor experiences that promote healing, connection, and well-being.

As someone who supports veteran/first responder mental health efforts, I have witnessed the life-changing impact these outdoor experiences have on participants. These programs provide more than just recreational opportunities—they offer healing, connection, and renewed purpose. The change in members' demeanor when they arrive for a trip/event, to when they leave the trip/event is absolutely amazing. I have personally seen the change in participants from a look of defeat when they arrive, to laughter and smiles when they leave. They ultimately knew that they weren't alone and had made connections with people that understood what they were going through.

The mental health crisis among veterans, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS personnel is well-documented. Programs like HHO address this crisis in a proven and effective way:

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While HHO has been successful in securing funding through private sources it has been more difficult the last few years, legislative support would allow us to serve even more Minnesotans, ensuring more of our heroes receive the benefits from our programs. This investment is not just about supporting those who serve—it's also about strengthening Minnesota's economy. Funding these initiatives means tax dollars go back into our state, supporting local businesses, outfitters, guides, and mental health professionals and rural communities that benefit directly from these outdoor activities.

I respectfully urge you to advocate for and approve funding for these critical programs. Our heroes have given everything for us—it's time we stand up and support them in return.

Thank you for your time and dedication to Minnesota's veterans, first responders, and military personnel. I appreciate your leadership and commitment to their well-being.

Sincerely,

**Brian H Chaffee**

HHO Event Director

[brian.chaffee@hometownherooutdoors.org](mailto:brian.chaffee@hometownherooutdoors.org)



Respected members of the Minnesota House and Senate,

As a police officer, I made a career of helping and supporting people on their worst days. The toll of that responsibility and those experiences eventually became too much to carry and I knew I could no longer go on in the profession that I dedicated my life to.

Even though I knew it was a survival instinct to walk away, it was still one of the most difficult decisions I made in my life. The fear and uncertainty of what would happen next was almost unbearable.

Hours and hours of therapy over the following months and years since I took off that badge have changed my life. I regained the confidence and mental strength to step out of my comfort zone to attend events such as those hosted by Hometown Hero Outdoors.

During these events, I have had the opportunity to spend time with men and women that have had many similar professional life experiences as myself - good and bad. In those connections, I recognized the same camaraderie and bond that brought me so much joy and pride when I worked as a police officer. This support network has been an incredibly important part of my healing - not only for myself, but my family.

Financial support of organizations such as Hometown Hero Outdoors is not only an investment in our current and former first responders, it's an investment in public safety.

Chris House

February 9, 2025

**To:** Members of the Minnesota House & Senate

**Subject:** Urgent Support for Funding Hometown Hero Outdoors (HHO)

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Thank you for your time and dedication to Minnesota’s veterans, first responders, and military personnel. I appreciate your leadership and commitment to their well-being.

Sincerely,

**Amber Ladd**

**Regional Training Officer, MN DNR Enforcement**

[amberaladd@outlook.com](mailto:amberaladd@outlook.com)

**763-442-4035**

February 9, 2025

To whom it may concern;

Outside of youth sports, I've never worn a uniform. A uniform to serve this country or our communities. For about 20 years I wore a suit in corporate America. Just a few years ago I left to care for a sick child (who is now thriving) and never looked back. With the support of my incredible wife, I took the path of small business ownership and am still gridding away to live that dream. From the beginning of this phase of my life, one of the many pleasures of being my own boss is the opportunity to choose where the funds go when there is any extra. Certainly, it starts with bills and the bank and taxes. After that we hope that there is enough left to help fuel good work somewhere.

As that decision point came upon us, we were blessed to meet Chris Tetrault and the Hometown Hero Outdoors organization. They were coming into their own about the same time my journey as a business owner was doing the same. A few of those extra dollars needed a home and it was quickly that I realized HHO was going to be a part of that.

My body and mind were spared the damage of war or service. However, the damage of war didn't spare my family. My grandfather, Lyle Frolund served in World War 2. He returned to Fargo, ND where it was apparent his body was largely unharmed, but his mind was not. My mother shared stories about waking up to him screaming from his bedroom in the middle of the night. Those screams were only silenced by the bottle of E&J on the top shelf of his closet. Eventually these screams broke apart his family and he drank himself to death alone in Fergus Falls, MN. The scars of that war didn't stop with him. My mother was unable to maintain her 2 marriages. I made a painful decision to remove her from my life in 2016 so that I could stand between my children and the mental damage she continues to carry with her.

In the late 90s, I met one of the most incredible men in my life. My father-in-law, Gaylon Entgelmeier. Gaylon served in the jungles of Viet Nam. Like many he came home to a largely ungrateful unempathetic country. As a testament to the man he is, he put his head down and went to work. He delivered mail in St. Paul, drove school busses, and cleaned a bar at night. Nobody can quite explain when he slept. But he and his wife Lana raised 3 beautiful daughters and have 4 grandchildren.

A few years ago I was on a fishing boat talking to Galen about his retirement future and what he planned to do with the surprisingly comfortable savings he'd accumulated. Assuming he'd talk about a boat or some travel he slammed me again with the character I'd grown to love and appreciate. He sighed and said "well, nobody was ever there for me and I will be there for my granddaughters. I'm going to help them go to college."

The pride in which he expressed that was muffled to me by the beginning of his sentence. "Nobody was ever there for me". I realized that would be the same thing my grandpa would say if he was still with us. Nobody was ever there for them.

When I met Chris and the crew at Hometown Hero Outdoors that landed on me. These people are being there for men and women who need them. They show up with passion and empathy and love in a genuine mission to help put these people back together and let them know they aren't alone. Furthermore, in this day of screens and devices they get them OUTSIDE. Away from the stresses and trappings of modern life. Many being able to engage with a passion they've long had, making it even more conducive to opening up and receiving that support. Or, for the first time getting outside and experiencing a whole new world where they can let it go and bond with those who understand their struggles.

They are there for them and that's why I support HHO and I can think of no better mission for any tax dollars we may be blessed to direct but to HHO and their mission.

Sincerely,



Shane Liberda, Ham Lake MN