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Dear Finance Committee,

I am a probation officer in Minnesota. I'm writing to ask you to support Pension Omnibus Bill SF4276-DE2 Article 5 LCPR Amendment S4276-10A LCPR Amendment S4276-11A Establishing the Local Government Probation and Telecommunicator Retirement Plan to be administered by PERA. The bill would support the opportunity for us to retire at the age of 60 rather than 66. Our jobs are difficult and carry the responsibility to protect the community and those we supervise. We are constantly affected by primary as well as secondary trauma. Our work can be dangerous and threatening to ourselves, as well as our families and children. Police officers often ask us how we do this job and indicate they would never work with the same people without personal protection in the form of a weapon as they are licensed to do. We face uncertainty in each day of this job, and with that uncertainty carries an extreme amount of mental exhaustion.

To work in this field until the age of 66 is not only a safety concern for our mental and physical health, but it is also a safety concern for the communities we serve as it is unreasonable to expect an individual in this type of position involving this amount of stress and uncertainty to carry out the functions of the job to a high degree for that length of time. It is difficult to try to comprehend how such a bill wouldn't be supported when it is our money we are agreeing to pay to be provided not an outlandish and unduly request, but an appropriate retirement age. Our purpose is to change lives and help individuals become the best people they can be but while assisting in protecting the public. With these demands comes a high level of stress, emotional strain, physical demands, trauma exposure both primary and secondary, and uncertainty. We play a vital role in public safety and given that importance it is vital to retain agents in these positions and provide appropriate incentives for others to join this work ongoing. This bill would allow for appropriate retirement age from this work and incentivize others to join this field which assists in ensuring safe communities for generations to come.

It is critical to finally create a pension plan recognizing the vital public safety work probation officers and 911 staff provide in communities across MN. This plan is the consensus product of the legislative work group involving people from all sides of the issue and has full support of the Corrections organizations across the state. It represents the culmination of intensive work and compromise over the last 3 years.

This bill was passed unanimously and with full bipartisan support in the LCPR (Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement). I believe this is the most reasonable plan that provides meaningful benefits for all probation and 911 staff across our state and is long overdue.

Thank you for your consideration and support of this bill.

Angie Rushmeyer, Career Agent
Stearns County