



March 6, 2022

TO: Chair Mariani and Members of the Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Committee

FROM: Butch Inks, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: Support for Public Safety Related PTSD Reform

Dear Chair Mariani,

I am writing to express my support for the public safety disability bill being introduced to the house. As the committee is aware cancer, cardiac, and emotional trauma, including PTSD are the leading killers of firefighters. Public safety members experience higher rates of mental health challenges than the general population. Suicide is becoming increasingly more prevalent among firefighters, police officers, and EMS professionals. Our public safety service members have been on the front lines of our community's response to COVID-19 and civil unrest.

The Saint Paul Fire Department has seen claims for PTSD grow by over 400% in the past three years. PTSD ranks second among all claims, with only COVID-19 exposure/infection higher. Worse yet, the diagnosis of PTSD only ensures the separation from service of the member experiencing it, leaving them to deal with the mental health repercussions of their service alone. This bill not only supports our firefighters and police officers, but it also prioritizes their health and wellness, and aims to keep these valued members of the community in the profession of service to the public.

Our priority to members experiencing emotional trauma is to get them the help they need to heal. In a time when employment in public safety is less desired than it ever has been, we desperately need to maintain the experience and skills these trained professionals provide. If it were any other injury, we would do our part to help make them whole and help them to return to work or at a minimum provide



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them the help they need to enjoy the years ahead of them. My support for this bill is both for the professional men and women who have chosen to serve and the communities they serve. The public deserves the best from our public safety officials, providing them with the resources they need, enables them to be better serve the public.

Sincerely,

Butch Inks, Fire Chief

cc: Mayor Carter
Deputy Mayor Tincher
Council Members
Assistant Fire Chief Gaede
Assistant Fire Chief Simpson
Personnel File