

Dear Honorable Senators

I write this statement with a heavy heart. I was a police officer in Minneapolis who was directly impacted from the Minneapolis riots over the summer of 2020. Since the riots I have lost so much and continue to lose more and more everyday. Not only did I lose my career, my mental health, and my future. I am in the process of losing my hope and the hope in the system which I have dedicated my entire life too. I was born and raised as a Minnesotan. I served my country in the military and dedicated my life to providing service to the citizens of Minnesota and America .

I was one of the officers that was making a final stand when the 3rd precinct fell to the violent mob. I was there when they chained the gates and laid their bodies in the only path to escape that night. I was there when they set the building on fire in the hopes we were trapped inside. I was there when they climbed the fences and swarmed our position. I was there when we pulled back and they pushed forward to attack, hurt us, or even try to kill us. I was there when the city literally destroyed itself and turned to violence at every turn. I continued to hold the line and to do my duty to the community. It was in July when I realized I was a broken shell of a man and was mentally incapable of performing my duties. I now live with severe PTSD, anxiety, depression, flashbacks, nightmares, and anger episodes. I sought out mental help on my own because there was not help offered. It was clear from a certified doctor that I had PTSD and was unable to be a police officer anymore. This same thing was backed up by two other certified doctors, which I thought was enough for the State of Minnesota.

I was wrong, I was forced to continue to be subjected to relive the events thru further evaluations due to PERA's request. The evaluator for PERA even stated and I am quoting "I do not know why they are subjecting you guys to this it is causing terrible psychological effects to have to relive these events." Mentally I want to move on and truly heal, which I can't heal completely with having to be questioned about what happened to me and the events that have broken me. I cannot heal until these events are over. Soon as I take a step forward in my recovery PERA's process truly pulls me back to a dark place only make my symptoms worse. The easiest way to describe the pain I experience is like having a knife in my back and PERA continues to twist the knife. Adding insult to my injury is having to continue to prove that I am broken to everyone from my state, to my doctors, and to PERA. I wish for a day you could experience my situation and numerous other officers that feel betrayed. All year we have been told to trust the science trust the doctors, why does PERA not trust my doctors, my mental health specialists that have been there with me since the riots.

Most people in hard situations had some kind of aid they could apply for to financially help them. However with this process that has been going on since July we have been left high and dry. There is no program to help someone on medical leave. How does one pay for insurance, which is more than my house payment. I lay awake from weekly nightmares, but also now lay awake wondering how I will provide for my family. The stress of this process makes my mental health even worst. How I will pay for our basic needs of our family? How do I tell my son we have no money to help with his autism? How do I pay for therapy when there is no money for food. I am simply being told to wait with no light at the end of the tunnel. All I ask is please help me and numerous other officers move on and get well by making this process less damaging to our health and livelihood.

Respectfully

A former Minneapolis Police Officer