



April 24, 2019

Senator Chuck E. Grassley  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Grassley and Senator Gillibrand,

I am writing on behalf of How2LoveOurCops and disabled first responders across the country to thank you for your support of our nation's first responders by introducing S. 1208, the "Protecting America's First Responders Act." This legislation will significantly improve the Public Safety Officers' Benefit (PSOB) program for those severely injured serving communities across the country.

Far too often, terms such as "catastrophic injury" and "gainful work" are often misunderstood and/or misinterpreted. This can prevent or delay benefits for disabled first responders who are catastrophically injured in the line of duty. In addition, current interpretations often discourage those who are permanently disabled, but are wired to serve, from trying to move forward and serve in some, although limited, capacity. These heroes already express thoughts such as "My family would be better off had I died." This legislation will help alleviate thoughts of "My family is better off if I just give up trying." Updating PSOB disability definitions of "gainful work" to be more consistent with existing federal law will help these officers and their families move forward. While these benefits cannot begin to replace all that these heroes have lost, it is our profound hope that the provisions in S1208 will help severely disabled officers to obtain the benefits that they deserve.

Too often, and especially in cases involving a disabling injury, paralysis, traumatic brain injury, heart attack or stroke; the PSOB process can take years—which is a much too long and far too frustrating process for these officers and their families. PAFRA addresses this problem specifically by:

- Requiring PSOB benefits be awarded based on the effective amount as of the date of benefit determination, rather than the date of the injury
- Expanding the program's subpoena authority to more efficiently secure records needed to evaluate claims.
- Making education assistance for eligible survivor family members, who pay out-of-pocket education expenses while awaiting a decision, retroactive

While no law, benefit or government program can heal permanent, life altering, disabilities. This legislation can reduce the financial pressures these families face, allowing them to focus on healing, rehabilitation and finding their new normal. It can literally mean the difference in whether these families can stay in their homes, keep their kids in their schools and maintain some sense of normalcy in a life that's already been robbed of anything "normal."

For those who feel forgotten, used and thrown away, this legislation provides hope; and hope can be the difference between pressing forward and giving up. Thank you for bringing hope. Please know that I have heard from disabled officers all across the country who have been on the brink of despair. I cannot adequately express what your willingness to care for these heroes means.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'HP' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Heidi Paulson  
Vice President Wounded Officers Division