



## Sheriff's Department



Robert Roed  
Sheriff

January 19, 2023

Chairman Larson and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Jason Kraft and I am testifying in support of Senate bill 2213. Currently I am a Captain at the Ward County Sheriff's Department in Minot. I am also a combat veteran of the Army's 101st Airborne division and was in the initial ground invasion of Iraq in 2003. I spent my 19th birthday in a gunner's turret on the way to Baghdad. I have firsthand experience in telling you, that many of the effects on a person's wellbeing, from being a soldier and an officer, are similar in many ways. Yet the services provided to each are vastly different.

The same as our soldiers, we expect our officers to be tough, and they are. We expect them to be warriors, to protect us when we need them. We expect them to pursue evil, no matter where they find it. Then, when the days over, and they go home, they find it difficult to tell their spouses, their friends, and even fellow coworkers about what it is they've seen or done. We expect them to shift emotional gears on the fly.

That's because we learn how to turn our emotions off in this profession. It's a survival skill, it's also a skill that saves lives and rescues victims. Don't think about what you're doing, just do it. But where do you go when it's time to think again. Who do you turn to? All too often I'll tell you're left alone. The complexity of the burden that we expect out officers to bear is not easily understood.

So is funding a specialized officer wellness program worth it? Is this something that North Dakotans would be okay with spending their money on? What is the cost of one officers emotional well-being? That's a tough question to answer, but ironically this bill asks for an appropriation of \$400,000, which is the same cost to the federal government in life insurance benefits for one service member.

Recently, a respected law enforcement officer in the Minot community tragically took their own life. The grief and acknowledgement of this Officers death in the community was overwhelmingly apparent. I drove in the procession, and I witnessed the streets lined in places with people standing outside their cars, some saluting, some with their hand over their heart and others solemn. You'd be hard pressed to find one person that day that wouldn't support this bill.

Society today understands what it is that we go through. It's difficult to count how many times I've been randomly thanked by complete strangers over the years for what it is I do. Never once in that same regard has someone randomly told me I'm overpaid, over appreciated, or have too many benefits. If this bill can affect the outcome of one officer's life, only one, it's worth it.

Thank you and with that I can answer any questions if you have any.

Jason Kraft, Captain  
Ward County Sheriff's Department