

Dear Commission members,

The Minnesota Correctional Officer Retirement Association (MNCORA) is strongly opposed to admitting 911 Telecommunicators into the PERA Correctional Plan.

The PERA Correctional Plan is a high risk retirement plan.

On their website PERA states,

“The Correctional Plan was established in 1999 for correctional officers serving in county and regional adult and juvenile correctional facilities due to the physical nature of their jobs. The members of this plan are responsible for the security, custody and control of the facilities and their inmates. The plan has about 1,000 retirees, and boasts 3,700 working local correctional officers.”

It is the recognized policy of the state that special consideration should be given to employees of governmental subdivisions who devote their time and skills to protecting the property and personal safety of others. Since this work is hazardous, special provisions are hereby made for retirement pensions, disability benefits and survivors benefits based on the particular dangers inherent in these occupations. The benefits provided in sections [353.63](#) to [353.68](#) are more costly than similar benefits for other public employees since they are computed on the basis of a shorter working lifetime taking into account experience which has been universally recognized.

Dispatchers do not fit the definition of this plan. The major emphasis of the Report from the working group was the ‘stress’ of dispatching. While we don’t doubt there is stress in dispatching almost every job class has stress unique to itself. The snow plow driver working 12 hours in a blizzard, the nurses and doctors at hospitals, probation officers meeting alone with criminals they are supervising. If the definition of the Correctional Plan is changed to include stress and Dispatchers are allowed in, the Correctional Plan will just become the General Plan for everyone that wants a 55 retirement regardless of physical danger. Some of you may recall Probation attempted to join this plan in 2003 and it was rejected.

In the Appendix on page P A-22 of the Report are claims for benefits provided by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Research

and Statistics, **Event or exposure for claims accepted for indemnity benefits, 2012-2020**

There were 937 claims by correctional officers, and only 22 by dispatchers.

The numbers are telling. Under the category 'violence' 37% of CO's claims fell under this, zero for dispatchers. Assault, feces and urine being thrown on them, rape and even death are dangers for CO's. Not dispatchers. CO's also have to be very careful outside of work as they and their families are subject to assault from released inmates. Again not dispatchers.

Workers comp statistics provided by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (P A-21) show that in 2018-2020 alone (after Covid) a full 28% of all CO injuries were disease. Correctional Officers are in daily physical contact with inmates and Covid ran rampant in Minnesota Jails infecting CO's and their families as a result of that inmate contact. TB and scabies are also spread to CO's. Dispatchers had zero claims under the disease category.

The Working Group was tasked with “whether changes to the pension plan coverage for 911 telecommunicators are appropriate.” SF 2485

Subd. 2.

Duties; report.

The working group must submit a report to the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement by March 1, 2022. **The report must recommend whether changes to the pension plan coverage for 911 telecommunicators are appropriate.** If the working group finds that such changes are appropriate, the working group must recommend changes to the pension plan coverage for 911 telecommunicators. The recommended changes may include but are not limited to moving 911 telecommunicators to the correctional plans.

The working group **did not reach consensus** on “whether changes to the pension plan coverage for 911 telecommunicators are appropriate.”

That should have been the end of the matter. Instead the working group strayed into a series of recommendations unrelated to the pension that at best are work place issues better tackled at the State, County and Local employer level, none of which fit the statute that created the working group.

The Power Point prepared for the Commission is misleading.

On page 8 of the power point asks the question,

D. Should 911 Telecommunicators Be Covered by a Correctional Plan?

Then fails to include the answer in the power point! This question, according to the statute creating the working group, *was only to be asked if there was consensus on changes to their pension*. There was no consensus.

On page 10 of the Report the working group answers that question, it clearly states that:

D. Whether 911 Telecommunicators Should Be Covered by a Correctional Plan

The Working Group discussed whether 911 telecommunicators should be covered by the PERA Correctional Plan, or in the case of state employees, by the MSRS Correctional Plan. **The Working Group decided not to recommend that 911 telecommunicators be placed in the correctional plans.** This decision was in response to position statements submitted by groups urging that 911 telecommunicators not be placed in a correctional plan, including from the Minnesota Department of Corrections, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and the Minnesota Correctional Officer Retirement Association (MNCORA). These position statements are included in the Section D of the Appendix. (Emphasis added)

There are questions as to why the 2 Correctional Plan members, required by the statute, Heidi Pauman chosen by PERA and Dan Gorman a CO chosen by the MSRS were not included in the vote approving the Report. An email was sent out asking for availability. Heidi Pauman marked that she wasn't available at the time the working group met on January 28th and Dan Gorman's name doesn't appear on the list. The Report wasn't due until March 1st. Surely the working group could have found a day in the month remaining where they could have attended. Excluding the only two members of the Correctional Plans from the final vote skirts the statute.

Under section IV B of the Power Point, "Cost of changing 911 telecommunicator pension benefits" it estimates the cost at \$79 million. That number shouldn't even be in there as they point out **NO ACTUARIAL STUDY WAS DONE!** As a matter of fact that whole section shouldn't be there as no consensus was reached to make changes to pension plan coverage!

All of this seems a smoke screen to lead this Commission away from the statutory question which was already answered with 'no consensus' and lead you to consider moving the 911 Telecommunicators into the PERA Correctional Plan ignoring the opposition within the working group itself in the Report.

Dispatchers do not fit the definition of the PERA Correctional Plan. They do not face physical dangers. The working group failed to reach consensus on whether changes to the pension plan coverage for 911 telecommunicators are appropriate. Instead they wondered into workplace conditions not covered by the statute.

The original Bill that led to this workgroup was SF 2198 described as " 911 telecommunicators transfer from the general employees retirement plan to the local government correctional plan; transferring eligible service credit "

No Correctional Officers were allowed to transfer credit into the Correctional Plan when it began in 1999. They had to leave all past credit in their previous pension and had to complete the vesting period. When CO's become Police Officers or Sheriff's Deputies their time remains in the previous plan and they must complete the vesting period. The vesting period for the PERA Correctional Plan is 50% at 5 years and 100% at 10 years. To give dispatchers service credit would be wrong and cause existing and previous members of the plan to demand Equity.

To conclude, MNCORA is against adding Dispatchers to the PERA Correctional plan, especially crediting past service. According to PERA there are 4,700 members, you can almost double that when adding in spouses. It is 100% funded, the healthiest of all the PERA pensions and to throw in people who don't meet the requirements and without any actuarial done will cause irreparable harm to the PERA Correctional fund, the retirees and their families. The working group did not reach consensus on "whether changes to the pension plan coverage for 911 telecommunicators are appropriate" and that should be the end of it.

MNCORA Executive Board
and Advisory Committee