

House Judiciary

03/25/2025 Upon Adjournment

HB25-1031 Law Enforcement Whistleblower Protection

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Mckinzie Rees For themselves	<p>Hello everyone, my name is Mckinzie Rees. I'm sure you recognize my name as it has been published over the few years ad nauseam. I couldn't be here today because I have a business to run that relies on me to be present. However I want you to hear me even if it's just through paper. My dad always told me to be the change you wish to see in the world and that's why I'm speaking with you today and have helped write this bill for accountability from a law enforcement perspective about other law-enforcement personnel. I was a rookie cop that was sexually assaulted by my higher ranking officer in December 2019 and justice was not served until April 2024. At a young age I wanted to be a police officer and held myself to a higher standard in hopes to achieve that goal one day. I could sit here all day and give every example as to why this bill was created the way it was but instead I'm going to let two things do the talking. One being a section out of my victim impact statement that was read at sentencing earlier this month and two a lengthy quote from the judge during that sentencing. My victim impact statement reads as follows: The weight of the badge has a new meaning to me. It wasn't the kind of weight that the people that wear it hold in order to protect the public but the weight of the badge was the weight that it had over me. I wanted so desperately to protect and serve at any cost but instead I got served the ultimate sentence of no protection. Secondly the judges words are as follows: "What we have here is an aggravated case with inappropriate conduct. We have somebody who is in a position of power and used that power to prey on innocent people in our community and also conspire. Whether you blame others or not, these actions, conspiring with other members of law enforcement, the way the Court sees it, it was like a good old boys club." Sir, you are the problem. You are the person that law enforcement talks about when they say, "a few bad apples." You are the one creating the circumstances that your colleagues live with on a daily basis -- you. It's you. You're the person that you guys sat around the table and talked about as making life so hard for your former colleagues. You are the reason why we have investigations into law enforcement. My story is no different then the rest of the stories you will hear today it touches on misconduct, retaliation for whistleblowing, exhausting every avenue to seek resolve and falling on deaf ears, lack of oversight, corrupt patterns and practices, and down right unfair treatment. I ask that you see this bill as a resolution to provide an equitable workplace for every member of law enforcement regardless of rank or structure. I ask that you see this bill as a beginning to the end of the thin blue line of silence bad officers rely on when hiding their indiscretions. I ask that you take the time to actually read the bill from a different lense than the "radical leftist agenda to tarnish the career". Lastly I ask that you consider my stories and those bold enough to face the harsh reality and speak on experiences. These stories are true, real, and raw. If passed this bill would not only have prevented what happened to me from happening but would have held the</p>

	<p>countless other people responsible from derelicting their duties, holding themselves to the high standard we expect as citizens and from being downright unrighteous human beings. We need the pendulum to swing even if it's just a little to protect others like me.</p>
<p>Abby Cop For themselves</p>	<p>I am a line level police officer, who, in 2023, launched a grassroots campaign with fellow line level police officers to fight back against the Thin Blue Wall of Silence culture. For those who may not know, the Thin Blue Wall of Silence is a social concept in law enforcement in which officers are expected to minimize or altogether ignore blatant misconduct to protect one's fellow brother. Those of us officers involved in this bill stand firmly against such a culture, and each share a story of our own sacrifices, horrors, and ongoing traumas that have resulted from good police officers advocating for transparency, accountability, and integrity. What started as a group of two officers seated at a library table typing a letter to Rep Bacon in 2023, evolved to a growing group of officers representing agencies big, small, rural, urban, and everything in between. We have amongst us military veterans, proud mothers and fathers, immigrants, those with disabilities, racial minorities, officers with almost 30 years on, to officers with only 3 months on, and many more. We are testament that whistleblowr retaliation can happen to absolutely everyone. This concept for a bill evolved from emails, to meeting at libraries, to then creating HB24-1460, which was handwritten by police officers (a harmony of some of who are staunch conservatives, others who are moderate, and some who lean liberal). We came back stronger and better prepared in 2025, by immediately meeting with stakeholders last summer and fall, collaborating with parties on all sides of the issue, and diligently handcrafting this bill. Real police officers are losing their livelihoods due to retaliation from untouchable command staff. There have been times, in fact, where police officer suicides SURPASSED line of duty deaths. Officers struggle with mental health for a multitude of reasons, but from personal experience, each of us have faced the cold embrace of depression while battling through retaliation alone. This bill will inadvertently save police officer's lives, encourage advocacy, and bring accountability to those who have perpetrated campaigns of destruction against moral line level police officers. Please vote YES on behalf of the 12,000 honorable police officers who serve this great state of Colorado everyday. Please do not base your support on a letter "D" or a letter "R", not Blue or red, not left or right. Vote for a commonsense accountability measure that was handwritten and crafted by scratch by real police officers, and was collaboted on in good faith with opposition and stakeholders. Please assist us in seeing this bill through and keeping our profession honorable, as it should be.</p>

Good afternoon, my name is Stephanie Silverman. Unfortunately, I am unable to be physically present today to testify, but I figured my written testimony is the next best thing. I was employed with the Colorado Springs Police Department from 2016 through 2023. During this time, I held the positions of 911 Operator, Public Safety Dispatcher, and Police Officer. Becoming a police officer is a calling for those who aim towards upholding the law and protecting those who cannot protect themselves. For those who strive to bring communities together by building relationships and building trust. Sadly, there are quite a few who wear the badge that disregard this calling and instead abuse the badge along with the power it holds. In 2022, I observed body camera footage of my then-husband having an on-duty affair with another female officer. I brought this to the attention of both my supervisor and theirs, but instead I was the one reprimanded while neither of them received any sort of punishment. Instead, they were both publicly awarded for unrelated acts that very same year. Two months following my reporting of their actions, I was arrested by my own department for felony domestic violence stalking, which was related to the body camera footage that I observed. I went to jail for 23 hours, while my department held a press conference detailing my arrest and leaked my personal address to the local media where my children resided. Shortly after being released from jail, I was notified that there was no probable cause for my arrest, leading to the felony charge being dropped. It was during this time that I realized that the treatment towards me was personal. Due to this, I started doing my research into my department. Through this, I found that dozens of other higher-ranking officers, including those within command staff, had been found guilty of committing illegal acts themselves, but because of the position they held or who they were friends with, they were covered-up entirely. I began bringing these stories to light with the help of other police officers and civilians alike, which led to my department initiating three Internal Affairs Investigations against me. It was at this point that I was bullied into making the decision to medically retire. Although that is a very brief look into my story, it covers the topic of misconduct, retaliation for whistleblowing, workplace harassment, and corruption. I helped write this bill and because of that I ask that you see this bill as the first step in stopping those within power from continuing the current status-quo, the passing of the good-ol' boy torch, which only benefits themselves and preys upon others. Thank you.