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March 18, 2016

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

As you begin work on the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations (CJS) appropriations bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, I write to encourage continued support for the Public Safety Officers Benefit (PSOB) program. The PSOB Office within the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Office of Justice Programs (OJP) is responsible for processing in a timely manner PSOB claims on behalf of injured law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders or their survivors.

However, too many injured public safety officers and families of fallen public safety officers are waiting extended lengths of time to be notified of final determinations on their PSOB claims. This unacceptable occurrence continues despite a 2004 Attorney General memorandum requiring the PSOB office to respond to all claims within 90 days of receiving all essential information. One New Hampshire police officer waited 1,100 days for a resolution of his claim, only to find out his claim was denied.

A 2009 Government Accountability Office report found that survivors of fallen officers did not receive a response regarding a determination of their PSOB claims for an average of 18 months. Moreover, in 2015, the DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) released a report that continued to find delays in OJP's processing of 2,510 claims filed between FY 2008 and FY 2013. Compounding the issue of long-pending claims, the OIG also found that for the claims OJP was able to determine, 27 percent of those claims were not processed within one year of determination.

For the above reasons, I urge the subcommittee to include the following report language in the CJS appropriations bill: *the committee encourages the PSOB Office to streamline the*

documentation requirements for a claim to reduce the burden on injured officers or surviving families, improve communication with claimants and agencies regarding these documentation requirements, provide regular updates to claimants on the status of their claim, improve PSOB claim decision-making documentation to facilitate timely and efficient legal review, improve the collection and management of PSOB claims data, and establish metrics and regularly report on program performance. Not later than 90 days after enactment, the PSOB Office shall report to Congress the steps it will take to implement these priorities.

Thank you for your continued support of this critical program for public safety officers who put their lives on the line every day to serve and protect their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelly A. Ayotte". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator