

Senators Riley, Hansell, Jama, Kennemer, and Lieber,

I am a faculty member at the University of Oregon, where I conduct research on supporting youth with disabilities to achieve positive life outcomes by supporting their trajectory from high school to the workforce via additional training and community supports. I am a Career Non-Tenure Line faculty in which my work is solely supported through grant research which helps support the economy of Oregon through the personnel employed on these grants. The current OPE rates at the University of Oregon have made it more difficult to secure research dollars due to the high cost of personnel who work on our grants. My research lab is the community and schools and therefore the primary expenses on grants is personnel who conduct the work in the community as opposed to expensive lab equipment. We cannot propose competitive applications for high level research because of the personnel costs compared to competing universities across this nation.

I am writing today in support of the -1 amendment to SB 112, which will be before your committee on Thursday morning, March 11. This bill amends the default retirement enrollment for unclassified staff at public universities from PERS/OPSRP (Oregon Public Service Retirement Plan) to the ORP (Optional Retirement Plan).

Currently at the University of Oregon, as part of the hiring process, eligible unclassified employees have the opportunity to select which retirement plan they would like within six months of starting their position. If no selection is made, under current law, universities enroll the employee in PERS/OPSRP as directed by a statutory default. The -1 amendment to SB 112 would amend the default presumption and require universities to enroll eligible unclassified employees in the Optional Retirement Plan, if they do not proactively make a selection.

This policy does not take any benefits away from any employee. Instead, it provides our staff with an excellent retirement option while helping universities save scarce resources. While the cost to the University is less, the benefit to the employee remains comparable. The -1 would, over time, result in measurable savings for our public universities. An added benefit of this proposal is that it will help faculty at the University be more competitive for federal research grants because less of the federal funding will be allocated to OPE costs.

Thank you for taking the time to hear from faculty members. This policy will preserve faculty retirement benefits, save universities money, and make faculty research grants more competitive at the federal level. Please adopt the -1 amendment to SB 112, and vote yes on the bill.

Sincerely,

Deanne Unruh, Ph.D.