



Chair Grayber and Members of the Committee, my name is Joe Baessler and I am an Associate Director for Oregon AFSCME. SB 128 makes a needed change to the retirement of just over a dozen prison chaplains that work for the public employers. In 2016 it was brought to the attention of PERS that tier three (OPSRP) prison chaplains could no longer count their housing allowances as part of their retirement.

PERS Tier 1 and 2 prison chaplains could and those chaplains that were tier three were unable due to this administrative change. There was no bill but instead the department started to change which box they were placing the housing allowance on their tax form. The housing allowance is a third of their total compensation and so this is a very small number of people but the impact is huge for their financial security and the security of their families.

In 2016 the Department made an administrative change in how they defined the Housing Allowance for Prison Chaplains. It was not intended to decrease the pensions of these chaplains. We attempted to fix it internally. However, the department received a Department of Justice opinion that a law was needed to fix this issue. This bill will not have an impact on the tax liability of the chaplains and is needed.

Prison chaplains have the very difficult job of ministering to adults in custody but they are often the support that our corrections officers and other workers in corrections too. They are truly doing God's work in some of the most difficult working conditions in the state.

Please make this situation right for these hardworking dedicated public servants. Move this bil.

Respectfully Submitted

Joe Baessler

Oregon AFSCME