



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

February 24, 2025

Senate Committee on Labor and Business
Chair Kathleen Taylor
Vice Chair Daniel Bonham
Committee Members

Madame Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

Good morning and for the record, I'm Karl Koenig President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council. We represent over 3800 career fire fighters, paramedics, prevention and wildland professionals across Oregon.

We are here to testify in favor of Senate Bill 751. There are two important concepts in this Bill we would like to comment on. First the competitive nature of attracting fire fighters to Oregon is much different than my career beginning. Now two tiers later our High Bred Combination Defined benefit- defined contribution benefit system is falling behind the other two West Coast states, Washington and California, as it relates to retirement packages offered. For the first time in my 35-year history we have veteran fire fighters leaving with 10 years of service and going to Vancouver Washington with increased salary and higher retirement percentages that equates to a larger retirement benefit. California has a 3% multiplier and is recruiting for both Law Enforcement and Fire fighters throughout Oregon.

I have spoken to the Bill's author, and we suggested to better define the inclusion of all fire professionals in Oregon by amending the use of Federal definition of Fire Fighter and instead use ORS 181A.355 fire fighter definition. I'm asking Madame chair for the latitude to ask for that change here in the public hearing.

We are also supportive of the Study on retirement medical insurance options available to retired police and fire fighters. As one of those myself I realize that it is near the top of expenses for me and my family in retirement. Having been part of a partially self-funded health trust since 2009 I know we can do better as a group and make serious progress on improving benefits while keeping costs down. We as Oregonians are fortunate we can stay on our employers health insurance but our required to pay the full premiums which can be as much as 50% of a members take home retirement check.

We are hopeful this concept can continue to fruition as having a respectful retirement and adequate health insurance until Medicare eligibility is such a large impact to our retiring fire fighters and police officers.

Please vote Yes in committee on SB 751 with Fire Fighter definition changes.

Regards

Karl Koenig

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President

Oregon State Fire Fighters Council