



March 26, 2025

Good afternoon Chair Taylor, Vice chair Bonham and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Zachary Wheat and I work at the Oregon Health and Science University as a chaplain. I have worked here at OHSU for 3 months and chose to join OHSU so that I could support patients and their families as they navigate the healthcare system. Spirituality is so important to many people as they find support and strength when they are ill or injured.

SB 757 makes a technical change to the retirement of a small handful of OHSU chaplains. SB 128 from the 2023 session aligned prison chaplains who are tier 3 PERS recipients to treat and include their housing allowance as a member's taxable income with tier 1 and 2.

Part of our salary is set aside for housing allowance as a way to compensate for our work as hospital-based clergy. While this allows us to have relief in a profession that none of us chose for financial gain or progress it has impacted our ability to retire well and have money set aside. This change would allow us to continue to set aside money to cover housing costs in an ever accelerating housing market while not sacrificing the amount of money we are able to retire with.

The work we perform is a critical service to Oregonians in need of spiritual services when navigating a tough time in their lives. We believe it is fair and just to be included in this technical fix and urge a yes vote for this small number of workers.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Zachary Bryan Wheat, M.Div, BCC  
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