



AOCE

Professionalism People* Persistence* Protection*
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Good afternoon Co-Chairs and members of the JOINT WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY. My name is Michael Van Patten, I am a Correctional Sergeant of twenty seven years, and I am the President of the Association of Oregon Corrections Employees (AOCE). The AOCE is a labor organization that represents around 725 sworn/certified Officers and Corrections Specialists at four of Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) Correctional facilities.

I am here today to express our concerns about a portion of **HB 5005** dealing with the Post Relief Factor (PRF) which was submitted as a Policy Option Package by the DOC, but was not added to the Governors' proposed DOC budget. The PRF that was submitted by the DOC would benefit the DOC and the Officers that work within facilities by providing the appropriate relief factor needed to operate a safe and humane environment. The PRF ties directly to Officers ability to bid for vacations and be relieved for training, which in turn helps to create a safe work environment.

As Director Peters has already outlined to the Committee, the higher than average suicide rates, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), cardiovascular disease, and divorce rates related to Correctional Professionals, the need is apparent. While we understand that these are tough times, providing vacations and training or a proper PRF is a part of doing every day business as an employer within a 24 hour 7 days a week function of state government.

The PRF will ensure that the DOC is also providing reliefs for the Officers when it comes to time off to be with their loved ones, allow the DOC to provide the needed training that has fallen behind, and help reach the outcomes of the current business practice. This will help ensure that the facilities are safe, civil and productive living environments where the Officer interactions with incarcerated individuals help shape positive behavior. While the DOC encourages Officers to influence behavior, acknowledge positive change and provide incentives to change their behavior, the State of Oregon should also provide the Officers the ability to have time away.

With the Governor's move towards Health Care and Wellness programs, the evidence based practice of time away (vacations or single days off) from the work site to relax and be with loved ones, helps to rejuvenate the mind, body, and spirit thus creating a healthier employee.

These men and woman work the toughest beat within the State of Oregon by providing custody, control, and supervision of incarcerated individuals. They work hard every day to protect the safety and welfare of the general public while ensuring they go home safe to their loved ones at the end of their shifts. The AOCE would urge this committee to look carefully at HB 5005 and allow Oregon's Correctional Officers employed by the DOC to take meaning full time away from the correctional environment with their family and friends.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Michael Van Patten
Correctional Sergeant (ODOC)
President (AOCE)