

SB 811 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Workforce

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Meeting Dates: 3/6

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Classifies as “police officer” under Public Employees Retirement System any employee of the Oregon State Hospital. Applies police and fire level of benefits to service performed on or after the effective date. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

BACKGROUND:

Oregon's Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) enables public employers to provide their employees with retirement benefits. State government, public schools, community colleges, and many local governments (cities, counties, and special districts) participate in PERS. Public employers currently participating in PERS cover about 95 percent of all public employees in Oregon.

There are two types of classifications for all primary PERS plans, “Police and Fire” and “General Service.” PERS members who work in a position that meets the definition for “Police Officer” and “Firefighter” are classified as “Police and Fire” (P&F). Employees classified as P&F under PERS statutes can retire at an earlier age and have a higher benefit factor used in calculating their retirement benefits. For both General Service and P&F, the level of benefits differs depending on the hire date. An employee is a Tier One member if they began working for a PERS-participating employer before January 1, 1996; Tier Two employees are those who were first employed on or after January 1, 1996, and before August 29, 2003. All other employees are members of the OPSRP Pension Program.

Examples of qualified positions for the P&F classification include certain Department of Correction employees, Oregon State Police officers, local government police officers, parole and probation officers, the state and deputy state fire marshal, and persons employed by cities, counties, or districts whose duties involve firefighting. All other qualifying positions are classified as General Service. Frequently, legislation is introduced to expand the definition of “Police Officer” to afford P&F status to a broader range of positions.

Senate Bill 811 expands the positions that qualify for the P&F classification, phasing in categories of Oregon State Hospital (OSH) employees beginning in 2017, 2019, and 2021. Effective June 30, 2017, the police officer classification includes OSH employees who are subject to the statutory prohibition against striking for certain public employees and are employed as registered nurses or licensed practical nurses. Effective June 30, 2019, OSH employees who are licensed physicians or required to be in areas populated by patients to perform the primary function of the employee’s position also qualify for the P&F classification. Effective June 30, 2021, all employees of the OSH qualify for the P&F classification.