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Chair Kathleen Taylor
Senate Committee on Workforce
900 Court St. - State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Taylor and members of the Committee:

Chair Taylor, members of the committee. My name is Barbara Walsh. I am here today to testify in opposition to SB 559 and SB 560. It is important that when you talk about PERS, you know that you are talking about me and so many others like me.

I have been an Office Specialist for the Child Welfare office in Medford for five years.

We have a very heavy caseload. A lot of families in our community are struggling. It can be really overwhelming at times. In my job, I support the caseworkers and it means a lot to me to be able to support the amazing work they do and contribute to helping the families.

My time with child welfare actually started as a volunteer. After the recession I, like many people, had to find a different kind of work. I met some people involved in child welfare and was so impressed with what they were doing I just started volunteering until I got a job. It pays less than the private sector, but I am in my 60s so job security and retirement benefits matter a lot to me.

I think people have a false idea about how much public employees make. I don't make a whole lot. I am grateful for thrift stores and I count every penny. My salary isn't such I can put much away for myself. I manage to stash about \$100 a month.

I've also heard people say that public employees do not contribute to their retirement. That isn't true. I pay 6 percent of my pay every month to my retirement. Out of my own paycheck. If that 6 percent is taken from me to pay the state's unfunded liability, that's a flat out pay cut to me that I can ill afford.

And I certainly cannot afford to replace that six percent for my retirement if it is taken away. I can barely manage to stash an additional \$100 a month as it is now.

I think I am about 10 years away from retirement. Financially I will have to work until I am about 77. If my PERS was to be cut even more than it is now, I think I'd just have to work until I died in my cubicle. I can't picture how I would be able to retire.

I think it's immoral that there are some that want to reduce the retirement benefits of people like me. It's immoral and, frankly, insulting. What we do is essential for our community. The private sector isn't going to take care of these

vulnerable children. We work so hard and we care so much. We aren't in it for the money but we shouldn't be forced into poverty when we retire because we went into public service.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Please think long and hard about the long term impact on folks like me before you vote on the bills before you today.