



February 13, 2017

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 Emily Gothard. I am a paralegal with a Portland State University. I'm an OPSRP employee and I have a little over 28 years to go before I reach full retirement. I am here today to testify in opposition to SB 559 and SB 560.

The average salary for paralegals in the Portland area is between \$58k-67k. After 3 and half years on the job, I earn 18 thousand less than the low end of average. I know that I could earn more elsewhere, but I believe in the work I do for students at Portland State University. I choose this work because I believe in the mission.

When you talk about "cost savings," you are talking about cutting the compensation of people like me. I consider PERS a part of my salary. It's not a bonus. It's a promise that was made when I took the job, and something I will rely on when I retire.

I am an OPSRP employee, and even though I didn't cause the unfunded liability, I am being asked to pay for it? That isn't fair.

If PERS is cut so severely that it no longer makes jobs like mine attractive, Oregon will not be able to recruit and retain qualified employees. I'm talking about teachers, firefighters, police officers, and nurses. People who, like me, do this work because we value public service and want to make Oregon a better state.

If I left my job, and was replaced by someone less qualified, it's the students at PSU who would suffer. The same goes for everyone if these cuts hit our schools, hospitals and first responders. That's what you're losing when you chose cuts.

I hope you will make a different choice, and decide to keep your commitment to the men and women who keep Oregon running.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I hope I can count on you to oppose SB 559 and SB 560.

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
LOCAL 503

PO Box 12159
Salem, OR 97309-1259

1730 Commercial St. SE
Salem, OR 97302

6401 SE Foster Rd.
Portland, OR 97206

1.800.452.2146
www.seiu503.org