



February 9, 2016

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 Tifini Linford. I am here today to testify in opposition to SB 559 and SB 560. I have worked for the state for three years now will be eligible to retire in 20 years. But one of my biggest fears is that I will never be able to *afford* to retire.

All I ever hear about PERS is that it's under attack – that it's on the chopping block and ready to be cut. This year, the chorus has been particularly loud. I am also part of a generation that can't count on social security income being there when I retire. So I am relying on PERS for a retirement income that I can actually survive on.

When I took my job at the Oregon Health Authority, the state made a promise that they would give me a salary and retirement benefits. I took this job because of the retirement benefits. I might earn less every month than what I could get in the private sector, but PERS makes up for that. Now, with legislators talking about taking away my retirement, I feel betrayed. I feel like you're going back on the deal.

I am also worried about the impact this will have on the agency I work for. I am worried we won't be able to recruit and retain good, high-quality workers. Every session when discussions about cutting PERS come up in the legislature, I have co-workers who decided to retire and lock in their plan instead of staying around another few years and risking cuts. We lose good people when the legislature threatens to cut PERS. And I imagine the headlines in the Oregonian are enough to turn people off from taking a job with the state.

At some point, we need to draw the line in the sand and say enough is enough. I'm asking you to do just that. Instead of balancing the budget on the backs of hard working people like me – please address the fact that Oregon is 50th in the country in corporate taxes.

Thank you.

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