

During the online public meeting held Thursday, February 11, 2021, regarding SB 425 and SB 426 the Honorable Senator Lieber asked two specific questions regarding the definition of “police officer.”

Mr. Olineck, the Director of PERS, to whom the questions were directed, provided a definition of only one of the twenty-two (22) job classes/groups/descriptions that are listed under the definition of “police officer” under ORS 238.005, section 19. He read the description of subsection (a), which defines employees that work within the Department of Corrections

It needs to be stated and understood that not all jobs listed under the definition of “police officer” as defined in ORS 238.005, section 19, are sworn members of a police agency.

As stated above, there are currently 22 different job descriptions listed under the definition of “police officer.” For clarification, I have listed the last four as they are not only the latest to be added to the list, but are clearly not what one would consider a “police officer.”

- ***(s) Employees at youth correction facilities and juvenile detention facilities under ORS 419A.050 (Authority to acquire, equip and maintain detention and shelter facilities), 419A.052 (Specifications of facilities) and 420.005 (Definitions) to 420.915 (Procedure upon apprehension of escapee, absentee or parole violator) who are required to hold valid Oregon teaching licenses and who have supervisory, control or teaching responsibilities over juveniles committed to the custody of the Department of Corrections or the Oregon Youth Authority.***
- ***(t) Employees at youth correction facilities as defined in ORS 420.005 (Definitions) whose primary job description involves the custody, control, treatment, investigation or supervision of juveniles placed in such facilities.***
- ***(u) Employees of the Oregon Youth Authority who are classified as juvenile parole and probation officers.***
- ***(v) Employees of the Department of Human Services who are prohibited from striking under ORS 243.726 (Public employee strikes) and whose duties include the care of residents of residential facilities, as defined in ORS 443.400 (Definitions for ORS 443.400 to 443.455), that house individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.***

None of these job categories require certification by the DPSST. None are sworn police officers, nor do they work for a policing agency. Additionally, I would like to note, that at my agency, we cannot strike. I work for the Oregon State Police, Southern Command Center located in Central Point. We are the sister center to the Northern Command Center located in Salem. I am mentioning this because of the comment in subsection (v) above, regarding employees of DHS (public employees) who are also prohibited from striking. Although we are covered by a CBA, we are also not allowed to strike. And, as stated we are always required to maintain minimum staffing under all circumstances.

Please understand that I am in no way discounting the importance of the job classifications listed above; they are all important. However, I think it is also important that members of this committee understand that telecommunicators are not the “odd” duck. We are not just clerical staff who enters data into a computer and answer on the phone. We are not office assistants who work 8a-5p with weekends and holidays off. We are highly trained and certified professionals, who must always be there, manning the phones, providing emergency assistance to those in need. While no police units are on duty and the fireman and paramedics are safely tucked into their station, we must always be on duty awake, alert, and ready to jump into action at a moment’s notice.

Telecommunicators and EMD’s are required to be certified by DPSST, just like police officer, fireman, and parole and probation officers. We are required to maintain that certification with 12 hours of annual in-service training for telecommunicators and another 8 hours for those who hold a certification in emergency medical dispatch.

Most of us who have chosen this career have done so because we want to serve the public. We want to help people. Not everyone can do what we do. Many do not get through training, and there is a huge turn over rate due to the stress that accompanies the job. Because of that stress we should be able to retire in a way comparable to our public safety brothers and sisters.

Respectfully,

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