



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 128

January 31, 2023

Chair Taylor and Members of the Senate Labor and Business Committee:

My name is Elena Martinez and I have been a Correctional Officer at the Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP) for the last 23 years. I am also the President of the Association of Oregon Corrections Employees (AOCE). AOCE represents about 750 individuals working for the Oregon Department of Corrections at the maximum security OSP, the medium security Oregon State Correctional Institution (OSCI), the minimum-security South Fork Forest Camp (SFFC), and individuals working for Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE) throughout the state. Our members include corrections officers and corrections professionals, including: nurses, counselors, chaplains and trades workers.

Senate Bill 128 will fix an inequity that our chaplains have experienced for quite some time. It is standard practice that ministers working for a church receive housing as part of their compensation package, in addition to their salary. As chaplains working for the State of Oregon, however, they do not receive housing. We bargained into our collective bargaining agreement that 35% of their monthly salary is designated as a housing allowance under the IRS rules. While this helps with their taxes it harms their retirement by not counting towards their PERS salary calculation. SB 128 will allow them to treat that housing allowance as salary for purposes of their PERS account. Other state employees have all of their salary apply to their PERS accounts and these chaplains should be no different.

The work our chaplains provide to the State of Oregon and the adults in custody at the Department of Corrections is critical and they should be acknowledged and compensated fairly for that work.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 128.

Thank you,
Elena Martinez
AOCE President