

Chair Taylor and Members of the Committee:

I am writing today to address the issue of the housing allowance for Oregon Department of Corrections chaplains. As a Tier 3 chaplain, I feel it is wrong to have the housing allowance removed from my final salary. This directly impacts the amount of money the state is supposed to provide into my PERS account, and it gives me significantly less. The housing allowance is not supposed to be a deterrent, yet it feels like that right now. I should not be forced between having to choose between the clergy housing allowance and what the state has agreed to pay into my PERS.

The larger issue here is fairness. Why is the housing allowance removal only impacting Tier 3 chaplains? Why should some chaplains not be affected by this, while the remainder of us are? This does not make any sense. I know some people in the military who get a housing allowance, and it affects them all the same. I also know plenty of clergy in the community who are all equals when it comes to claiming a housing allowance. So why is the state treating some of us chaplains differently than others? Thank you for your time and consideration of this important subject.

Respectfully,

Chaplain David Betts