

Submitter: Josh B

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure: SB631

Members of the committee,

Thank you for taking the time to consider the contents of SB 631. The changes in this bill are drastically needed if we want to preserve the physical and mental wellness of state employees, particularly those working within correctional facilities. Mandatory overtime is an unfortunate reality of working in the field of corrections, seemingly becoming the norm instead of the exception. Overtime is distributed through a system known as the "bucket list". The list works by sorting the names of everybody on a particular shift and as people work overtime their names fall from the top of the list to the bottom of the list. In theory this means people who volunteer for a lot of overtime will remain towards the bottom and less likely to be mandated. The reality is that the collective bargaining agreement allows management to mandate overtime twice a week, so if someone decides to volunteer two or three times a week to keep themselves at the "bottom of the bucket", they could still be mandated to work two additional shifts - which happen with more regularity than one would think. Staff are forced to work their lives around these 12 - 16 hour shifts, giving them anywhere between 8 and 12 hours to commute home (which for some staff can be over an hour), make time for their family, and handle personal and household duties like bathing, eating, cleaning, doing laundry, and sleeping. Then these employees commute back to work to start their shift and hope that 8 doesn't turn into another 12 or 16.

Correctional staff are working in an environment which requires them to be constantly alert for threats to safety and security, responding at a moments notice to incidents such as fights, suicide attempts, medical emergencies, or other rapidly evolving situations. They could be working in positions that require them to carry a firearm and make split second decisions about employing deadly force to stop an escape. Do you want someone whose had a total of 10 hours of sleep in the last 48 hours making critical decisions in these situations? It is deeply irresponsible to place staff members in those situations with little rest and borders on wanton behavior on the part of Department of Corrections management.

In written testimony on 2/2/2023 provided by Rob Perrson, Assistant Director for Operations at Oregon Department of Corrections, he argues the impact this bill could have on staffing for correctional facilities and talks about the struggles and successes that management has had with recruiting. Mr. Persson failed to mention that vacant positions are one of the largest drivers for the mandatory overtime crisis plaguing the department. He also failed to mention the reasons why we're struggling to recruit new

staff - such as uncompetitive wages compared to correctional deputies working in county jails. He mentions the hard work of the recruitment team, whose only solution seems to be posting ads for positions on Craigslist and Indeed. Compare this to other states like California, Delaware, and Michigan where their correctional departments advertise vacancies on TV, radio, YouTube, billboards, and so on. If the department really cared about staff wellness, again like Mr. Perrson argued in his testimony, we'd be seeing a much more directed effort at recruiting so we can stop mandatory overtime.

The Department of Corrections has seemingly abdicated their responsibility to recruit new staff. This legislation is needed to compel department management to make a concerted effort to recruit new staff and stop relying on overtime as a means to plug the holes. It is unacceptable that this so-called 21st century progressive public safety agency be allowed to continue on with 20th century draconian practices.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this bill.