



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision

1321 Tandem Ave. NE

Salem, OR 97301

(503) 945-0900

<http://egov.oregon.gov/BOPPPS>

March 9, 2023

The Honorable Senator Prozanski, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary, Members

Testimony re: SB 951

Chair, Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

During the 2021 regular session the Senate Judiciary and Ballot 110 Implementation Committee heard SB42, which is very similar to SB951. That bill would have extended Police and Fire PERS benefits to certain Parole Board positions. The committee forwarded the bill to Ways and Means with a do pass recommendation. SB42 did not have a hearing in Ways and Means and did not move out of committee.

Also, during the 2021 regular session SB41 was passed and was subsequently signed into law. SB41 allowed for certified Parole and Probation Officers to maintain their certification when coming to work for the Parole Board, provided they maintained all DPSST training requirements while employed by the Parole Board.

After the 2021 session, the Board was contacted by PERS to discuss the passing of SB41 and the failure of SB42. In that conversation, PERS stated the only reason the certified positions at the Board did not qualify for P&F benefits (under both state and Federal law) was due to the language in ORS 238.005(19)(g) which did not directly list the Parole Board. Until the passing of SB41 there was no need for the Parole Board to be captured in ORS 238.005 as there were no sworn P&P officers at the Board. SB41 changed that. If the language in ORS 238.005 was changed to include the Parole Board it would extend the P&F benefits to 3 individuals currently employed and certified as Parole and Probation Officers at the Board.

This legislation is important to the Parole Board, not only for recruitment but more importantly for the retention of qualified staff at the highest levels of the agency. Currently two Board Members are certified P&P officers and were specifically recruited for their almost 30 years of combined Community Corrections experience. I, as the Executive Director, was specifically recruited for my 25 years of experience in Community Corrections. Three prior Executive Directors had been hired for their extensive experience with Community Corrections. Unfortunately, as it currently stands, once a person leaves a position specifically outlined in ORS 238.005, they lose their P&F benefits after being out of that position for more than 5 years, regardless of how long they were in a certified position. Historically this has meant that previously affected Board Members and Executive Directors have left the Board prior to that five-year window to return to a P&F eligible position. When this happens, the Board loses a significant amount of experience and knowledge.

Finally, unlike many bills that have historically been put forward to extend Police and Fire benefits to job classifications that did not meet the Federal law regarding P&F benefits, this bill simply amends ORS 238.005 to recognize all agencies who employ certified Parole and Probation Officers.



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Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the committee, thank you for considering this small, but important piece of legislation. While this bill will directly affect only a small number of individuals, it will have a significant impact on the Parole Board as a whole and its ability to recruit and retain highly trained and experienced officers from the Community Corrections field. Additionally, this can be achieved with a nominal fiscal impact.

Parole Board Chair,

Greta Lowry

Executive Director,

Dylan Arthur