



JACKSON COUNTY

Oregon

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Submitted via OLIS

Chair Taylor
Vice-Chair Bonham
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business

RE: Support for House Bill 2296 (2023)

Dear Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business:

Jackson County strongly supports the provisions of House Bill 2296 (2023) and encourages you to recommend passage of the bill as currently amended.

Jackson County, like many employers throughout Oregon and the United States, is struggling to find qualified applicants to fill vacant positions. As of the date of this letter, Jackson County has 171 unfilled positions out of a total of about 971, or a 17% vacancy rate. Additionally, our highly skilled and experienced work force is quickly becoming eligible to retire. We have approximately 70 employees who could retire today, or 9% of our current workforce, and an additional approximately 105 employees who could retire within the next 5 years, or an additional 14% of our current workforce. Jackson County needs any assistance we can get in being able to keep our employees to provide the services needed in our community.

The provisions of House Bill 2296 directly address these concerns. It will allow our most experienced employees to continue working for the County and providing needed services, without having to make the binary choice of working or receiving a retirement benefit from PERS. Further, the employer contribution for employees participating in the program reduces the unfunded liability exposure while not adding to the employee's PERS benefits. In our opinion, House Bill 2296 (2023) is a win-win proposal that we fully support.

Sincerely,

/s Joel C. Benton

Joel C. Benton
Senior Deputy County Administrator and County Counsel