



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Lewis, Vice-Chair Pham, members of the committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans:

I am writing to show support for House Bill 4045 which is before your committee.

I fully support the entire bill, and the creation of a hazardous category is much needed for the workers at the state hospital and 911 operators throughout the state. District Attorneys need to be classified as police officers as the bill provides. These are all critical components to our public safety system, and it is time to provide the retirement security that these employees deserve.

Specific to the firefighters, the age adjustment for retirement age is long overdue. It does a disservice to the public to have firefighters and police officers work until they are 60 years old if they do not have 25 years of service. In Oregon, if you are hired after the age of 35 you would need to complete 25 years of service and be 60 years old before you can retire. Police and Fire positions are very difficult for both your physical health and mental health. The life expectancy of firefighters is lower than the public, which means that we die younger than the normal person. Our bodies are broken down by the time we retire, as well as our mental health having taken a long career of stress. Worker compensation rates show that firefighters in this higher age group get injured more often and are more expensive to insure.

Throughout the last five years, your Oregon fire fighters have answered the call. Devastating fires within our cities and in our wildland interface—such as the September 2020 wildfires that changed the landscape of so many communities. Two major ice storms in a three-year period where firefighters worked tirelessly to serve their communities. The pandemic took a toll on our state, and being on the front line of this illness was a huge challenge for your firefighters.

Oregon firefighters, District Attorneys, 911 operators, and state hospital workers have had the backs of the Oregonians every day, and we ask that Oregonians now stand with us.

Please pass House Bill 4045 out of committee on a unanimous vote.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Alan Ferschweiler
Legislative Director
Oregon State Fire Fighters Council