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# A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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TO: Chair Grayber  
Vice Chair Tran and Lewis  
Members of the Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans  
FR: Tan Perkins, OR AFL-CIO  
RE: HB 4045 Support, PERS Public Safety Stabilization Act

February 6, 2024

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers and their families. We value workers' ability to retire comfortably and ensure that their benefits reflect the kind of stress they are under daily. We know that workers who engage in stressful jobs and ensure that the public is safe take on an undue burden not only physically but mentally. Due to this, we strongly support HB 4045 and the right for all work to retire comfortably after years of important services.

Many of these workers could take on higher paying jobs in privatized fields, with less risk, but instead they are dedicating their life services to the state in order for us to be cared for, safe, and protected. These workers have shorter life expectancies, and a higher mental load, while still living full lives with children, and families that need their attention as well. We must do better for these workers, their families, and our state.

24/7 workers who are exposed to high risk, high stress occupations like 911 operators, and Oregon State Hospital (OSH) employees currently do not qualify for increased retirement benefits compared to police and firefighters, though conditions are similar. The consistent exposure to high risk, high stress events can cause long-term emotional and psychological trauma.

As firefighters age in their physically demanding roles their rate of injury increases. This leads to higher workers comp, disability, and other types of claims dramatically increasing. Of course this leads to more expenses, but it also raises concerns that above the age of 55 folks are more likely to get injured more often. We believe that firefighters should be able to retire at 55 to ensure that they have the best quality of life after serving.

Due to the round-the-clock nature of the job, OSH workers and 911 operators are often unable to work until the regular age of retirement. At PERS' suggestion, this new category would help 3,200 public safety workers qualify for the improved benefits they deserve at a time of extreme workforce shortages.

We strongly encourage your support on HB 4045.