

HB 4045 Testimony by Joe Baessler

Chair Grayber members of the Committee, Thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is Joe Baessler and I am the Executive Director of Oregon AFSCME. We represent over 37,000 workers in Oregon in both the public and private sector from the Harney County Road crew to scientists at OHSU. We also represent many of the workers at the State Hospital, 911 call centers, SACU and Corrections. These are hard jobs. They are stressful jobs and they tend to shorten the lives of those that serve in these jobs. They are also so very necessary and we as Oregonians need them for their service to our community. They protect our communities whether they are in our prisons, state hospital or they are the voice in the night when we need them the most.

This bill is about supporting these workers that deal with stress we can not imagine and often physical violence. They need a secure retirement so that they know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. They don't have to do these jobs in this economy, they could go somewhere and make more money. They do it because this is their community and they love it as much as you do. Increasing the retirement benefit for State Hospital workers and 911 operators will save them from one more stress. How can they afford to retire and can I make it there? Corrections and SACU workers are often subject to physical assault as well as mental trauma and those with tier three have to work longer than any previous workers and they are not making it to retirement and we can not fill these positions.

This bill is the product of years of work with PERS to develop the appropriate benefit that reflects the balance of safety and cre these workers have to maintain to do their jobs. We want you to support this bill because the workers deserve it and for what they do for the community but this also has the added benefit of making these jobs, that only a special sort of person is willing to do, more attractive. These jobs that are the most essential of the essential and the hardest of the hard in the public sector. This is a benefit to not only the workers covered but to all Oregoinians Thank you very much for your time.