

Good morning Chair Taylor, Vice-chair Hayden and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Gary McCool and I am a Force Protection Officer at Kingsley Field. I have worked in my current position for over ten years, and I previously served in Military Security Forces roles, including base defense operations and dispatch functions.

In my day-to-day work, I perform armed force protection duties to protect state and federal property, personnel, and mission-essential military resources. Under Oregon law and established regulations, my duties include enforcing regulations, and Oregon Revised Statutes, responding to threats, and detaining individuals, when necessary, until custody can be transferred to civilian law enforcement. I patrol secure areas, respond to alarms, assess and respond to potential threats, coordinate emergency responses, and work closely with military security personnel and partner agencies to maintain safety on the installation.

I am here today in support of SB 1569, which aligns Force Protection Officers employed by the Oregon Military Department into PERS Police and Fire. Like other classifications included in this bill, our counterparts performing comparable public safety work already receive Police and Fire retirement benefits.

This is a benefit equity issue that directly impacts recruitment and retention. Force Protection Officers carry firearms, enforce regulations and Oregon Revised Statutes, and make high-risk decisions that affect public safety, yet our retirement classification does not reflect the responsibilities of the job. Aligning benefits helps retain experienced officers and supports continuity in critical public safety roles.

I urge this committee to vote yes on SB 1569.

Respectfully,
Gary McCool
Klamath Falls, 97603