

To the Members of the Oregon State Legislature,

My name is Nicole Kotsovos, and I am a Police Identification Technician with more than 18 years of experience. I submit this testimony in support of the proposed legislation extending Police and Fire designation under PERS.

The bill language applies to:

“Employees of the Department of the State Police, a county sheriff, a municipal police department or a police department established by a university under ORS 352.121 or 353.125 who are responsible for obtaining, classifying and verifying fingerprints using electronic or manual methods.”

This language directly and accurately describes my job classification and daily duties. As a Police Identification Technician, I am responsible for obtaining, classifying, and verifying fingerprints using electronic and manual methods for individuals who are under arrest and in custody. This work requires direct, hands-on contact with detainees in a jail setting.

Identification Technicians are the only civilian staff within the Portland Police Bureau who regularly have physical contact with incarcerated individuals. The detainees we fingerprint are often dangerous, mentally unstable, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and at times contagious with communicable diseases. It is routine for us to clean blood, feces, and other bodily substances from inmates' hands in order to obtain usable fingerprints. I have fingerprinted individuals immediately following violent crimes, including homicides, and have been placed in close proximity to inmates exhibiting extreme or unpredictable behavior.

The risks of this job extend beyond physical hazards. I have intervened in suicide attempts, endured sexual harassment from inmates, worked in areas contaminated by sewage backups, and experienced intimidation and harassment outside of work due to my association with law enforcement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we were required to maintain close physical contact with inmates without timely access to proper PPE and without being informed of known infections, despite our direct exposure.

Fingerprinting and identification are essential public safety functions. Our work directly supports law enforcement investigations, jail safety, and the criminal justice system as a whole. The hazards we face are inherent to custodial law enforcement environments and align with the responsibilities described in this bill.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to recognize Police Identification Technicians as eligible for Police and Fire designation under PERS, consistent with the bill's language and the realities of our work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nicole Kotsovos

Police Identification Technician

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