

To the Sponsors of Senate Bill 1569:

My name is Carly Armstrong, and I am writing to you to express my support for Senate Bill 1569, currently under consideration in Oregon Legislature. SB 1569 proposes that additional categories of public safety professionals - including forensic specialists, evidence custodians, and medicolegal death investigators outside of the Oregon State Police - be formally recognized as “police officers” under the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

This bill acknowledges a truth long understood by those of us working in criminal justice: the dangers, trauma exposure, and cumulative psychological toll experienced in these roles are not secondary or peripheral - they are central to public safety in Oregon.

Being a Police Criminalist with the Gresham Police Department, I have spent my 8-year career processing crime scenes and evidence from some of the most devastating events imaginable. My work has required me to handle:

- **Homicides**, including scenes marked by bloodshed, acts of violence, suffering, and profound loss
- **Infant deaths and other crimes against children**, which leave lasting emotional and psychological impacts on everyone involved
- **Suicides and attempted suicides**, where families and responders are left to navigate unimaginable grief
- **Violent assaults, fatal crashes, suspicious deaths, arsons, autopsies**, and every traumatic circumstance that falls between these extremes

Crime scene investigators and evidence custodians stand shoulder-to-shoulder with first responders, detectives, and medicolegal death investigators. All our professions routinely respond to unpredictable, hazardous, and emotionally distressing situations that mirror, or exceed, the trauma exposure faced by traditional sworn officers.

Despite these realities, professionals in our roles have historically been excluded from the retirement framework designed to recognize high-risk public safety work. SB 1569 takes an essential step toward correcting this inequity by ensuring that individuals who bear the psychological and occupational hazards of frontline criminal justice work are granted the same retirement classification as their law enforcement counterparts.

The reasons below reflect why I believe that HB1569 is integral:

- **It reflects the true nature of our work.** Trauma exposure does not discriminate between badge or job title.
- **It acknowledges cumulative psychological risk.** Forensic, crime scene, and death-investigation professionals face repeated exposure to violence, death, and scenes most people never encounter in their lifetime.
- **It strengthens Oregon’s ability to retain highly trained specialists.** PERS police-officer classification helps prevent burnout, promotes long-term workforce stability, and appropriately recognizes the demands of the job.

- **It aligns policy with operational reality.** The criminal justice system cannot function without those who process scenes, manage evidence integrity, or investigate deaths with scientific and procedural rigor.

My colleagues and I chose this profession to serve Oregon with diligence, precision, and compassion. We do so willingly, but the toll is real. The cumulative impact of witnessing repeated tragedy - particularly cases involving children and vulnerable victims - remains with us long after the scene is cleared.

SB 1569 is not merely a change in retirement classification; it is a long-overdue acknowledgment of the physical, emotional, and psychological weight carried by ALL forensic professionals, not just those employed by Oregon State Police, whose work is essential to justice, accountability, and community safety.

I respectfully urge your strong support for Senate Bill 1569. Thank you for your time, your service, and your continued commitment to ensuring equitable treatment for all public safety professionals in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Carly Armstrong