

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

For the record, my name is Daniel Carter and I am a Juvenile Custody Services Specialist (JCSS) at the Multnomah County Donald E. Long Juvenile Detention Center.

I started working for Multnomah County as an On-Call JCSS in 2008, and was hired for a full-time JCSS position in 2014. During my on-call stint, I also worked for a short time in Electronic Monitoring/Community Supervision. Since becoming full-time, I've been a Measure 11 Unit Lead, Evidence Based Practices Lead, Short-Term Unit Lead, and an On-call Work-out-of-class Community Justice Manager.

As JCSS, my co-workers and I manage every aspect of daily life (from cleaning, meals, and school to free time activities, managing problematic behavior, personal hygiene, and bedtime) for the juveniles in our detention center. We mentor, role model pro-social behavior, facilitate problem-solving, and try to correct thinking errors in our young people. All that said, our primary role is safety and security- we are the front line workers. Our detention center holds some of the highest risk youth, as well as juveniles over 18, with often violent person to person felony referrals such as murder, rape, and assault. We house gang-affected youth, OYA/DOC probation/parole offenders and young adults 18-22 years old with probation/parole violations. We keep these youth safe in a secure facility while awaiting trial, when no other less-restrictive means are available and, if out in the community, they have proven to pose a danger to others and/or themselves. With the inception of SB1008, we now tend to hold the most serious offenders for longer, due to the waiver hearing, often well past their eighteenth birthday. We also get to know these kids, and put a lot of care into their treatment, and invest in them. We know they aren't their worst decision. Other factors were at play as well. Then they leave our facility and lose their lives to gun violence or drugs and it's absolutely heartbreaking. It takes a toll. It leaves us at a loss.

In our regular course of duty, we respond to fights and restrain youth, we've experienced staff assaults, sexual assaults, and daily trauma. We are exposed to urine and feces, street drugs such as meth and fentanyl, communicable diseases, We have experienced several riots, in which one unit was so badly damaged it prompted a remodel. Some youth are so dysregulated at times that we are verbally and emotionally abused, and our lives and families lives threatened. We experience PTSD and vicarious trauma from working with youth who have been abused and neglected. Pregnant staff have been threatened with harm to their unborn babies, and staff are cautioned to practice personal safety measures on our way home. Several youth have threatened mass-shooter events at our facility.

Many staff have been injured, multiple times, in the course of our duties. I, personally have been on workers compensation leave five times equalling nearly 18 months of recovery and physical therapy due to injuries received while trying to keep our youth safe.

I am here today in support of SB 1569, which aligns Juvenile Custody Services Specialists into PERS Police and Fire. Like many classifications in this bill, our counterparts employed by other employers across the state already receive this enhanced retirement benefit.

Juvenile Custody Services Specialists arguably meet several of the police definitions already present in the statute, but they are worded in such a way that our employer is able to exclude us. We do the same work, with the same individuals, in a very similar setting, just at a different time in these juveniles lives.

Police Officer definitions-

(s) we have supervisory and control responsibilities over DOC/OYA youth in a juvenile detention facility- but we are not required to hold teaching licenses.

(t) our primary job description involves the custody, control, treatment, investigation or supervision of juveniles placed in such facilities- but our facility is not called a Youth Correctional Facility.

(v) we are prohibited from striking, and we house individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities- but we are not employees of the Department of Human Services.

It is also worth noting that JCSS are deemed "Essential Workers" and are required to work during emergencies and disasters, we manage traumatic events in the regular course of our work, we have a high risk of physical harm, and we experience being mandated to work overtime.

Receiving Police and Fire benefits will greatly improve the quality of life for JCSS, and the quality of detention employees for the county. JCSS will be able to retire earlier which makes room for more new hires at the bottom of the seniority list; bringing in fresh energy, enthusiasm, and ideas to an ever changing industry, as well as help thin out the top wage earners at the upper end of the seniority list. The pool of potential new hires will be larger and more competitive, bringing higher quality candidates to the county. As public servants, we tend to continue working after retirement, so this would give us better opportunities to explore other areas of public service, or bolster the on-call staff list, which enables us to use our PTO to further our self-care. This is a difficult and traumatic career, and often thankless, but it is also rewarding because the work matters. We do make a difference in some of these young people's lives.

I urge this committee to vote yes on SB 1569.

Respectfully,
Daniel Carter
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