



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY BOARDS
SERVING PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Testimony of Erich Bittner, Government Relations Director
Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities
In Support of HB 572 (PERS Service Credit for Non-Teaching DD Board Employees)
House Aging and Long Term Care Committee
May 23, 2018

Chairman Arndt, Vice-Chair Pelanda, Ranking Member Howse, and members of the House Aging and Long Term Care Committee; thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 572. This bill will resolve an important issue facing many of Ohio's county boards of developmental disabilities.

County board employees who work on a nine- or 10- month basis but have their pay spread over 12 months have for over 30 years been allowed to accrue a full year of service credit through the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System. These employees are typically teaching assistants, bus aides, or other school support personnel who, if employed by a school district and enrolled in another state retirement system, would receive the benefit of that full year of service credit. However, the results of a recent audit stated that OPERS lacks the statutory authority to provide that option to these county board of DD employees. We believe this to be an oversight in the Revised Code as the vast majority of county employees do not work in a school setting.

As a result of this oversight, however, county boards are at risk of finding themselves at a competitive disadvantage in the hiring and retention of qualified staff to fill these important roles. Depending on the school schedule, these employees could anticipate an additional six to 10 years before retirement compared to their peers filling identical roles for school districts. Should these employees choose to seek employment elsewhere, their departure could create service disruptions for the people and families served by county boards. In the long term, it would be more difficult to find qualified staff to continue to provide the high level of service that our communities require.

While the impact of this bill is profound for the people county boards employ and the people we serve, I would like to assure the members of the committee that it is limited in its scope and will only affect a very small portion of the more than 1 million OPERS members. Nevertheless, it is a much-needed workforce initiative to support a necessary component of Ohio's developmental disabilities support network.

I would like to thank Representatives Scherer and Howse for sponsoring this legislation and Chairman Arndt for bringing it before the committee in such a timely manner. Thank you to the members of this committee for allowing me to testify, and I will be happy to answer any questions at this time.