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Testimony on HB 572  
Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee  
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Chairman Hottinger, Vice-Chair Hackett, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee; thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony 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 9- 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 within the Ohio Public Employee Retirement System. These employees are typically teaching assistants and bus assistants or other school support personnel who, if employed by a school district and participating in another state retirement system, would receive the benefit of that full year of service credit. However, an audit performed in 2017 uncovered that OPERS lacks the statutory authority to provide that option to these county board employees. We believe this to merely be an oversight in the revised code, as the vast majority of county employees do not work within a school setting.

As a result of this oversight, 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 6-10 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 individuals and families served by county boards. In the long-term, it would be more difficult to find qualified staff to continue to provide a high level of service to our communities in the future.

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 impact a small portion of OPERS 1,000,000+ members. Additionally, the change is supported by OPERS, and the Ohio Retirement Study Council concluded that it will have no actuarial impact on the system, as it is a continuation of an existing practice. Nevertheless, it is a much-needed workforce initiative to support a necessary component of Ohio's human services network. In recognition of this fact, the House of Representatives deemed it appropriate to make the bill retroactive to 2017 to alleviate the impact on current employees.

I would like to thank Representatives Scherer and Howse for sponsoring this legislation, and Chairman Hottinger for bringing it before the committee in such a timely manner. Thank you to the members of this committee for your consideration of this issue, and I will be happy to answer any questions at your convenience.