



Ohio House Pensions Committee
HB 296, Interested Party Testimony
Steve Stein, President IAFF Local 67
December 13, 2023

Chairman Mathews, Vice Chair King, Ranking Member Lightbody, and members of the House Pensions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as Interested Party for House Bill 296 on behalf of the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 67. My name is Steve Stein, and I am the President of Local 67. Local 67 is the exclusive bargaining unit representing the men and women of the Columbus, Ohio Division of Fire from the rank of Fire Fighter through Deputy Chief. 1700 strong, our members are dedicated to protecting the lives and property of the citizens of Columbus.

To date this year, Local 67 members have completed 165,353 EMS Runs, 23,354 Fire Runs, 752 Public Assists and we still have the month of December unaccounted for. As the City of Columbus has grown, so too has the call volume and dependency on Columbus's Bravest. Columbus Fire Fighters are and have been national leaders in firefighting, EMS, technical rescue, HAZMAT and Urban Search and Rescue Operations. Your Columbus Fire Fighters are protecting everyone who lives, works and travels through Columbus 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

IF WE'RE NOT ADVANCING, THE FIRE IS

I have worked in the Ohio fire service for the entirety of my adult life, working at agencies of all sizes in Hamilton, Butler, and Warren Counties before coming back to serve my hometown of Columbus over a decade ago. Several elements of the fire service have changed over the last two decades, but our core mission and principles remain unchanged.

We exist to serve our communities when they need us, no matter what, no matter who, no matter where. Threats to public safety continue to evolve, and our ability to recruit and retain while more challenging than ever before—I contend the hiring landscape and competition for talent will only intensify and mirror the same challenges many of our stakeholders in the business community already face as we compete for talent in public safety.

I'd be lying if I said the 18-year-old version of me entering the fire service gave a ton of thought to retirement stability and the critical work of the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund. However, as I close in on 40 - as a husband and father - the stability of our pension fund is foundational to my ability to continue to serve both my community and my family.

Reiterating my initial comments, my expertise is serving the public on the emergency scene. I am standing before you, before this committee because the experts at the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund have unequivocally stated in report after report that we have a crisis at our doorstep.

- "In the annual actuarial report completed by Cavanaugh Macdonald Consulting, dated Jan. 1, 2022, OP&F achieved a 29-year amortization period, up from 25 years in the previous years' report. OP&F continues to be compliant with Ohio's requirement of a funding period of 30 years or less." *Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund Popular Annual Report for year ended December 31, 2022.*
- "In the annual actuarial report completed by Cavanaugh Macdonald Consulting, dated Jan. 1, 2021, OP&F achieved a 25-year amortization period. OP&F continues to be compliant with Ohio's requirement of a funding period of 30 years or less." *Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund Popular Annual Report for year ended December 31, 2021.*

- “In the annual actuarial report completed by Cavanaugh Macdonald Consulting, dated Jan. 1, 2020, OP&F achieved a 28-year amortization period. OP&F continues to be compliant with Ohio’s requirement of a funding period of 30 years or less.” *Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund Popular Annual Report for year ended December 31, 2020.*

We have a tactical saying on the fireground, “If we’re not advancing, the fire is.” That axiom applies to this bill and the problem we are trying to address and stave off. This is a time sensitive problem that will only be exacerbated by inaction.

I thank you all for your leadership and service to our state and am happy to answer any questions you may have.