



Ohio House Pension Committee
HB 296, Interested Party Written Testimony
Todd Ham, Defiance Fire Department, Local #918
December 12, 2023

Chairman Mathews, Vice Chair King, Ranking Member Lightbody, and members of the House Pensions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony as an Interested Party for House Bill 296. My name is Todd Ham, a firefighter for Defiance Fire Department, IAFF Local 918.

My Story

My name is Todd Ham, I have been with Defiance Fire and Rescue, Local #918 for 28 years.

When I left for college I got the following degrees: AAS in Electrical Engineering and a BSS in Public Safety Administration. After college I decided to join a volunteer fire department to see if it was something I might like and to help the community. I knew very quickly that this was the career I wanted.

FireRescue1's 2023 state-of-the-industry survey revealed some alarming statistics related to respondents' feelings about the job:

- 94% of respondents reported experiencing staffing challenges in the past 3 years;
- 64% rank their work-related stress a 7 or higher on a scale of 1-10;
- 46% have considered leaving their current fire department; and
- 42% are considering leaving the fire service altogether.

The pension was a small part of the reason I became a firefighter but it is a major reason that I stayed with it. I still love my job, but the time away from home, the long hours, and the lack of sleep definitely take a toll.

I firmly believe that our pension is what keeps our people working for 25 years or more.