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**TO:** House Public Insurance and Pensions committee  
**FROM:** Representatives Kevin D. Miller and Thomas Hall  
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**Sponsor Testimony on HB73: Create deferred retirement plan for PERS law enforcement officers**

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Teska, ranking member Brennan, and members of the House Public Insurance and Pensions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 73. In short, HB 73 requires the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System or (OPERS-LE) to establish and administer a deferred retirement option plan or DROP program for OPERS-LE members. This legislation was brought to us by sheriff's deputies who currently do not have this option; however, it would also benefit other law enforcement officers who are members of PERS-LE including township police officers and university police officers.

This is not a new concept or program, in fact, it's modeled after the programs already in place for members of the Ohio State Highway Patrol Retirement System and the Ohio Police and Fire Retirement System. Essentially, it will provide the same benefit to members of PERS-LE that members of the other two law enforcement retirement systems currently enjoy. Under HB 73, DROP is an optional program. It allows a PERS law enforcement officer who is retirement eligible to accumulate an additional benefit for retirement while continuing to work. This is permissible for up to eight years. Upon approval to participate in the program, the officer's retirement benefit is calculated and locked just as if they had retired on that date. Those monthly payments are then deposited into an account while the officer is still working. The officer continues in active service receiving their salary but does not earn additional service credit.

During DROP participation, the officer and the officer's employer continue to contribute to PERS. At the conclusion of the DROP period, the officer retires and can access the funds deposited into their DROP account.

There are several benefits of this program including:

- 1) Retaining experienced law enforcement officers during a time when they are leaving the profession in record numbers.
- 2) Keeping officers out of OPERS Health Care as they continue to be covered by the employer.
- 3) Allows employers to plan for future turnover by knowing an individual's DROP window.
- 4) Allows OPERS-LE members to accumulate a retirement nest egg during their final years of employment just like their peers in Police & Fire and the Ohio State Highway Patrol Retirement Systems.
- 5) The program is designed to be cost neutral; therefore, it does not negatively impact the health of the retirement system.

In closing, we have seen a significant participation in these programs by the systems that currently provide this option. It is our desire to make this program available for all law enforcement officers regardless of which retirement system they belong. After all, they have given so much during their years of active service and risk their lives for our safety every day.

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Teska, ranking member Brennan, and members of the House Public Insurance and Pensions Committee, we hope you will join us in support of HB 73. Thank you again for allowing us to provide sponsor testimony and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.