



FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE OF OHIO, INC.

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October 15, 2025

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Chair Peterson, Vice-Chair Teska, Ranking Member White, and members of the Insurance and Pension Committee.

Testimony in strong SUPPORT of House Bill 424.

My Personal Pension Fund History

I began my career in law enforcement with the Columbus Division of Police [hereinafter CDP] as a police officer on November 3, 1996, and simultaneously entered the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund. After sixteen years of service with CDP, I joined the Franklin County Sheriff's Office on January 2, 2013. At that time, my pension fund switched from OP&F to the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System [hereinafter OPERS]. I served as a Major in 2013, and the following year I was promoted to the rank of Chief Deputy in 2014, the position I currently hold today.

130th General Assembly - Senate Bill 42

In 2013, I was advised by OPERS representatives that I would be eligible for a "Joint- Pension" Retirement. Since my OP&F time was vested, there was no need for me to worry about purchasing that time, and it would be brought over when I had enough added PERS-LE years of credit towards my retirement/pension. That all changed legislatively on March 25, 2015, when SB 42 of the 130th General Assembly went into effect. This bill was abruptly amended and impacted multiple pension systems that the Ohio Retirement Study Council had not reviewed substantively.

Current Impact on Career Public Safety Professionals

As you know, OP&F and OPERS are disparate retirement systems with the same goal that is achieved significantly differently. During my time with CDP, I attained 16.2 years of qualifying service credit through the Ohio Police and Fire Pension System. Because of SB 42 and the disbandment of the "Joint-Pension" Retirement option, I will now have to serve an additional 16.2 years to be eligible for a service retirement. There are hundreds of others that the lack of public pension congruently impacts.

Future Impact on Communities

If the 136th General Assembly passes House Bill 424, it will positively impact public safety professionals, but more importantly, it will positively impact the citizens of Ohio. Currently, I would strongly discourage any public safety professional from switching from OP&F to OPERS or vice versa. By switching public safety agencies, the professional is harming himself and his family by negatively extending his stressful career. Law enforcement and fire service are highly stressful careers that are dedicated to helping people they have never met. These professionals spend their professional lives serving people in crisis. So why has the General Assembly made THE most difficult



careers even harder? Certainly, by switching agencies that have disparate pension systems does not make practical or financial sense for individuals, families, or communities.

In this current era of a lack of public safety professionals, the state legislature has limited these men and women's ability to enhance their careers and improve communities by lateral transfers throughout the state. If House Bill 424 is not passed, this will clearly limit experienced public safety professionals from switching from one pension fund to another.

If House Bill 424 is passed, this will provide county commissioners, mayors, city councils, city managers, township trustees, and other community leaders an opportunity to recruit talented public safety professionals without regard to the pension fund challenges that currently exist.

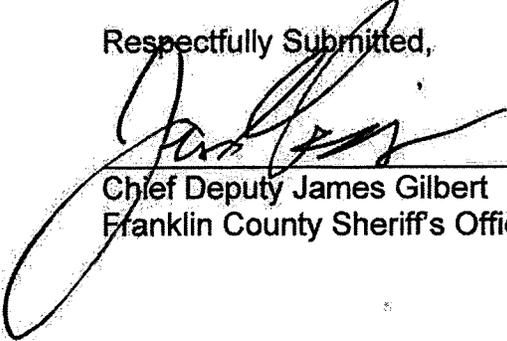
Conclusion

Please know that I believe none of us who are in this position are trying to game the system; we only want to be provided our opportunity to utilize our earned service credit. Our continued service to our communities and ultimately to the State of Ohio will continue; we just want our time and pensions to be calculated fairly, based on when and where we have served unselfishly.

I encourage the 136th General Assembly to respond to this **911 call** by **public safety professionals** who have switched public pensions to better serve THEIR communities.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter, and thank you for all you do in serving the citizens of Ohio.

Respectfully Submitted,



Chief Deputy James Gilbert
Franklin County Sheriff's Office