



Brian Baldrige
State Representative
HB 512 Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chair Lampton, Ranking member Miranda and members of the Insurance Committee – thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 512- legislation that intends to ensure the stability of the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund.

It is our legal obligation to fund our pension programs. It is a promise made to public employees – in this case first responders – and it’s a promise we must keep.

We have a workforce shortage crisis on our hands. Industry after industry has expressed major concerns about staffing. We cannot afford to have a workforce shortage when it comes to our first responders. It is vital that we retain and recruit talented and dedicated public servants. Having a sound and stable pension fund structure is crucial when it comes to long term retention of these valued public employees.

Let’s address the issue at hand. The Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund must make changes to ensure the long-term stability of the fund. Now more than ever given

the board's action in February to cut the fund's assumed rate of return from an industry-high eight percent to 7.5 percent.

The actions that the fund can take are limited. The OP&F can add funding, or it can cut benefits. The General Assembly must find a way to increase contributions or cut the retirement benefits promised to police and firefighters.

Ohio's police and firefighters have already experienced, in the last 8 years alone, \$3.2 billion in benefit cuts and they've seen a 2.25 percent increase in their contribution.

Local government revenues are strong and municipalities in localities are in a position to act. House Bill 512 increases employer contributions for police and fire to 26.5% by January 1st, 2027. Currently, the employer contribution for police is 19.5% while fire is 24%. This legislation allows for local governments to plan, implementing the increase over a span of five years.

As legislators we are often responding to crisis. This legislation lets us implement a sound fiscal solution before it's an emergency. It also assures that we fulfill our promise to tens of thousands of police and firefighters across Ohio.

I respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 512. I will now have my fellow joint sponsor, Representative Abrams speak to the bill.