

FIRE RETIREE TESTIMONY – HB 512

Good morning. Chairman Brinkman (fellow St. Xavier Bomber) and members of the Committee. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. My name is Tom Rave and I'm a retired Cincinnati Fire Lieutenant.

I'm here to speak with you for just a few moments in support of House Bill 512. Some of you might wonder why a retiree is here. Although some may think that this pension reform modernization isn't going to impact me, it does. The security of our fund does impact me and all retired fire fighters and police officers. I'm here because I've seen what has changed with the fund since 1971, and I've seen what hasn't. I'm here to confirm that common sense, reasonable pension reform is needed.

I've been around long enough, in fact, to remember the last time employers increased

their share. It was 1986. I was a young lieutenant on the Cincinnati Fire Department, my children were in high school, and I had all my hair with no gray.

It seems even longer ago than 36 years.

Now I not only have grandkids but, also, great grand kids, and my hair that is left is totally gray.

But more to the point for us here today, since then member contributions to the police and fire pension have increased. The cost-of-living increase has been capped for some members and delayed for others. And health care was drastically changed resulting in a stipend for members to buy insurance, rather than providing health care directly through OP&F.

By not increasing their share, the municipalities have enjoyed a three-decade run where they

could invest in other areas. Instead of a one percent increase every five years – just to try to keep up with the increased cost – they’ve depended on the markets to provide for their retirees.

Now, though, we can’t count on the markets. The markets are acting weird. Inflation is rampant and it’s not going anywhere any time soon. Still, House Bill 512 doesn’t require municipalities to make this right all at once. There’s no request for a huge increase to solve this problem now.

No, we’re here before it becomes a crisis. The pension is asking for a phase-in so that municipalities can plan accordingly. Let’s stop and recognize that – this is good government at its best. We’re here today asking you to take the step to ensure our system and protect the security that it offers all its members whether they be active, retired, or a survivor. There’s no

fire – but there could be, and we should adopt preventive measures.

You all know what it looks like when pension funds don't plan ahead and punt the ball down the field. We don't want that. Our retirees don't want it, our mid-career members don't want it, and certainly someone considering starting a career as a fire fighter or police officer wants the guarantee that the pension will be there when they need it.

For all these reasons, because it's the right thing to do, I ask you to support House Bill 512.

Thank you.

Tom Rave