



FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE OF OHIO, INC.

222 East Town Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-4611  
(614) 224-5700 Fax (614) 224-5775  
www.fopohio.org



House Pension Committee

September 26, 2023

Testimony on House Bill 94

Chair Matthews, Vice-Chair King, Ranking Member Lightbody, and members of the committee,

I am Mike Weinman, a retired Columbus police officer who serves as director of government affairs for the FOP. Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of the 23,000 FOP members from every corner of Ohio to urge you to report HB 94 favorably.

SB 42 of the 130th General Assembly, which went into effect on March 25, 2015, dealt with schools reporting to the Department of Education their use of safety and security tax levy money. In the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, it was amended with multiple pension system changes. Changes that the Ohio Retirement Study Council had generally not reviewed. One of those changes required former members of the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund (OP & F) and State Highway Patrol Retirement System (SHPRS) to work longer in OPERS to retire from OPERS. If a city police officer left their agency and took a position as a sheriff's deputy, he would have to have more time in OPERS to retire.

The change has negatively affected lateral transfers throughout the State and upward mobility for some, such as the city officer would have become the first female police chief for an extensive metro park system. Decisions to not take positions that fall under OPERS are being made throughout the State. Unfortunately, some decided to transfer, did not know about the change, and are now facing additional years, if not a decade, to retire. Such is the case of the former Mansfield firefighter who became a nurse/paramedic in the state prison system. He told our State Secretary Eric Lehnhart that he would never have switched had he known. Those who made the switch before the law became effective are the most aggrieved, as the change did not grandfather anyone.

Again, the FOP of Ohio respectfully asks that the committee favorably report HB 94. The changes made by OPERS are delaying retirements and preventing lateral transfers, becoming a significant workforce issue for scores of our current and potential new members.

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