

Chairman Mathews, Vice-Chair King, Ranking Member Lightbody, and members of the House Pensions Committee, my name is Brandon Rice, and I am a Police Officer with the Cortland Police Department.

I am writing to you today in support of House Bill 94. House Bill 94 would provide me and my fellow officers with the ability to change departments and possibly careers while staying in the public sector without being penalized. All public employees have chosen to serve their communities in one way or another. This service should not be limited to a career field we chose at 18 or 21 years old, instead there should be the option to transfer into a different department or agency in the public sector so we may continue to serve our communities.

One of the biggest issues I see with the current laws and regulations is an officer that begins his or her career at a department that utilizes Ohio Police and Fire Pension system cannot make a lateral transfer to a department that takes part in the Ohio Public Employee Retirement System without ultimately having more time worked in OPERS before transferring the time from OP&F. This barrier exists at a time where it is difficult enough to attract and retain an experienced workforce, especially when it comes to Police Officers.

For example, under the current pension laws, I currently have 18 years of service paid into Ohio Police and Fire retirement. I need only 7 more to be eligible to retire. If I were to transfer to a larger agency paying into OPERS to provide more opportunity for advancement, I would need to work over 18 more years before my current time would transfer giving me a minimum of 36 years full time service in addition to 3 years part time as a dispatcher and police officer.

Again, I reiterate my strong support for House Bill 94, and I would ask all the legislators involved in the process to pass this bill swiftly. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brandon Rice
Police Officer
Cortland PD