

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1558

As Reported by House Committee On: Appropriations

Title: An act relating to membership in the Washington public safety employees' retirement system for employees who provide nursing care to, or ensure the custody and safety of, offender, probationary, and patient populations in institutions and centers.

Brief Description: Authorizing membership in the Washington public safety employees' retirement system for employees who provide nursing care to, or ensure the custody and safety of, offender, probationary, and patient populations in institutions and centers.

Sponsors: Representatives Kilduff, MacEwen, Sawyer, Hayes, Harris, Griffey, Ormsby, Riccelli, Bergquist, Dolan, Doglio, Lovick, Ryu, Goodman, Peterson, Fitzgibbon, Muri, Stanford and Fey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/2/17, 2/13/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides membership in the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) for employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (Veterans Affairs) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) whose primary responsibility is to provide nursing care to, or to ensure the custody or safety of, offender and patient populations in state institutions including the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, the mental health hospitals, the Child Study and Treatment Center, the Special Commitment Center, and residential sites serving developmentally disabled patients or offenders.
- Provides membership in the PSERS to state, city, and county corrections personnel who are employed by a PSERS employer and whose primary responsibility is to provide nursing care to, or ensure the custody and safety of, offender and patient populations.
- Adds the Veterans Affairs and the DSHS as eligible PSERS employers.
- Permits members of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) Plan 2 or Plan 3 made newly eligible for the PSERS to choose between remaining in the PERS or transferring to the PSERS for periods of future service.

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Cody, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Tharinger, Volz and Wilcox.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Buys, Condotta, Manweller, Nealey, Taylor and Vick.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Schmick.

Staff: David Pringle (786-7310).

Background:

The Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) was created in 2004 and opened to members on July 1, 2006. The PSERS provides retirement benefits for state and local government employees who work in positions with law enforcement duties but are not eligible for membership in the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System. Members of the PSERS with at least 20 years of service will be eligible for full retirement benefits from age 60, five years earlier than the regular retirement age in Public Employees' Retirement System Plans 2 and 3. Members of the PSERS with 20 years of service may also opt for early retirement beginning at age 53 with a 3 percent reduction in benefits per year of early retirement.

Membership in the PSERS is restricted by an individual's employer and by specific job criteria. The PSERS employers are defined as the Department of Corrections, the Department of Natural Resources, the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Gambling Commission, the Washington State Patrol, the Liquor and Cannabis Board, county corrections departments, and the corrections departments of municipalities not classified as first class cities.

Summary of Bill:

Employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Social and Health Services that provide nursing care to, or ensure the custody or safety of, offender and patient populations in state institutions including the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, the mental health hospitals, the Child Study and Treatment Center, the Special Commitment Center, and residential sites serving developmentally disabled patients or offenders are eligible for membership in the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS).

In addition to corrections officers, membership in the PSERS is provided to other state, city, and county corrections personnel whose primary responsibility is to provide direct care to, or ensure the custody and safety of, offender and patient populations.

Members of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) Plan 2 or Plan 3 made newly eligible for the PSERS choose between remaining in the PERS or transferring to the PSERS for periods of future service. The choice to transfer to the PSERS must be made during an election period between January 1, 2018, and March 1, 2018. Membership in the PSERS for transferring PERS members is prospective, and past service credit remains in the PERS, making members' eventual retirement calculated under the dual membership rules.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Five years ago there was a pension reform bill that eliminated some early retirement benefits from the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), and also initiated a study of high-risk occupations in the PERS for possible inclusion in the PSERS. This bill reinvests some of the large savings from that earlier act. The PSERS would still be the smallest retirement system offered by the state. This would remedy an inequity for people working with and around some of the most dangerous individuals in the state. Earlier versions of this bill have been passed out of the Appropriations Committee three times before. While waiting for a hip replacement and being a few years from age 65, I know this bill won't help everyone. While a few employees can find less demanding positions, many cannot. Younger employees really stand to benefit from this change. Western State Hospital is the most violent place in the State of Washington. My wife, a worker at Western State Hospital, is at the hearing today while recovering from injuries suffered during an assault at work. As a nurse at Western State Hospital, the danger is apparent every day. A patient hit one of my coworkers without warning, causing a traumatic brain injury. Many staff seek counselling, and attacks on employees are a regular part of the workweek.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kilduff, prime sponsor; Matt Zuvich and Craig Giblyou, Washington Federation of State Employees; Lindsey Grad, Service Employees International Union Healthcare 1199NW; and Randell Goering and Sammy Sattler, Western State Hospital.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.