

Date April 10, 2009

TO: The Honorable Mike Schaufler, Chair
House Committee on Business and Labor

FROM: Roy Orr, Superintendent
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Addictions and Mental Health
Oregon Department of Human Services
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SUBJECT: House Bill 3132

Good morning Chair Schaufler and members of the committee, I am Roy Orr, Superintendent of the Oregon State Hospital (OSH) within the Department of Human Services, Addictions and Mental Health Division. I am here to testify before you on HB 3132.

HB 3132 would include physicians and nurses working at OSH in the definition of "police officers" as used in retirement benefits under PERS.

There is no question that physicians and nurses employed by Oregon State Hospital are in harms way due to the nature of their work environment and interacting with psychiatric clients. 74% of beds in Salem are designated for forensic patients who have been court ordered to the State Hospital for evaluation and treatment until fit to proceed in criminal court or have been adjudicated guilty except for insanity for crimes in the criminal court system. The remainder of hospital patient beds in Salem and Portland are designated for those persons in the categories of civil commitment or guardian admission.

OSH is dedicated to reducing the number and severity of incidences of violence against our employees. We are implement new treatment models and options to address the issue and we hope this will manage the behaviors of some of the most violent and disruptive patients at OSH.

The list of persons included in the PERS Police/Fire designations by being included in the statutory definition of "police officer" includes "livestock police", and lottery enforcement agents and staff at the Oregon Youth Authority. In many ways the staff

members at the Oregon State Hospital have similar job descriptions such as “the custody, control, treatment, investigation or supervision of individuals.”

PERS has informed us that they believe roughly 300 of the more than 1,200 staff employed at OSH would be affected by this bill. Because the contribution rates for this class of employees is 3.71% higher than other employees, PERS estimates that DHS would pay approximately \$3.0 million more in contributions in 2011-13 biennium for the 300 medical staff. The bill does not address the vast majority of staff at OSH and does not include the staff at the Blue Mountain Recovery Center.

OSH believes that it would be only fair to add in the other approximately 1,200 staff within the state hospital system. Line staff face the same dangers and stressors that our doctors and nurses face. However, this would dramatically impact the future fiscal impact of this bill.

While the bill has a significant impact in future biennia, OSH believes this bill has the potential to positively impact recruitment and retention of nurses and physicians at OSH. It recognizes the important contribution of these state employees and brings some level of parity between them and their colleagues who work in other state institutions. Unfortunately, due to the financial crisis in our state we are not sure this is the right time to proceed with this concept.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you.