

Members of the committee, for the record my name is Gabe Hall. I am I am testifying as president of WFSE local 862 and am employed by the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration at Green Hill School. I am here today to ask that you make employees of the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration eligible for the Public Safety Employees Retirement System (PSERS).

The PSERS was created to allow employees who work in high risk jobs, with high risk offenders, to be able to retire before age and infirmity make it too dangerous for them to work with that clientele. We in JRA work with volatile, dangerous youths that are, in many cases, highly aggressive. There is a high need for alertness and physical ability when supervising these youths. The cast I have on my arm today is the result of being assaulted by a youth while performing my duty on the Job. I have been off the job for ____ as a result. I worry how this and other injuries and age will affect my career in JRA.

Staff who supervise youths are required to attend and pass annual refresher trainings on Dealing With Resistive Youth (DWRY) techniques. This training is certified through the Criminal Justice Training Center, as are the instructors.

DWRY Training is rigorous, physically demanding and mandatory. This puts the workforce in a difficult position as staff age. More than a few staff have been injured completing the training to the degree that required a disability separation. A

career in JRA provides the citizens of this state with a highly trained, highly experienced employee who is needed to meet the complicated demands of treating youth who, if nothing changes, may be find themselves in a prison bed. Every youth we work with has a victim. Our job is to try to break that cycle. We need you to support us by validating the worth of our service to the state of Washington. Thirty years in this kind of environment isn't fair to my team, the youth I work with or tax payers.

Other employees who deal with this same population are currently eligible for PSERS. It makes sense for JRA employees to be included, for the very same reasons this committee recommended PSERS established: to prevent employees in high risk jobs from having to continue to work until there is an elevated risk of injury or negative impact to quality of performance.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Gabe Hall; President Local 862 of the Washington Federation of State Employees

Member of the Executive Board of Council 28 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

Members of the committee, for the record my name is Frederick Brown. I am a member of WFSE local 793 and am employed as a Psychiatric Security Attendant at Western State Hospital. I have worked at Western State Hospital for 13 years now.

I understand that this committee will make recommendations about including job classes like mine in the Public Safety Employees Retirement System. I came here today to say that I believe that jobs like mine should be given an earlier retirement age just like you already do for Corrections officers, County Parole officers and County Detention Workers.

Last month one of the patients I work with ambushed me and hit me with a sock full of batteries. He hit me in the back, but make no mistake, he was aiming for my head. I was off work due to those injuries for only 4 days, but if things had happened differently, it could have been much worse. It has been much worse for many of my co-workers. When I try to imagine myself working 30 years on this job just to get an unpenalized retirement, I wonder if I can make it.

Working in the environment I do, with the patience I am trained to work with is difficult and it's not for everyone. Weeks and months can go by and nothing happens, then without warning you get attacked. Some attacks can end your

career. I have to face those facts every day and still provide for the safety and well being of the patients I am in charge of.

The report you have been given about high risk job classification says that there are many ways to address the risk factors in jobs like mine other than through pensions. I think those things should be looked into. But I want to be clear that regardless of how much you change the rules, or give us better training, 30 years in a job like mine doesn't make good sense. We can't all promote, and our specialized training only provides so many other pathways to other opportunities.

I'm just asking that you be consistent and provide us with a pension benefit you have already decided is needed in similar areas of public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with you today.

Chairman Conway and members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Majken Ryherd and I am representing the Joint Council of Teamsters 28.

Thank you, Chair Conway, for the direction to work with your staff to try to tease out the classifications and data within the study you have before you.

Given the data, I would like to address three narrow groups who we would like to see addressed in some way as you and the legislature go forward.

First, as you know, the Department of Corrections came out in the data with injury rates above PSERS and the general population. Our interest is looking at all the people who work in the adult prison system. This would include all categories of nurses and health personnel – RNs, ARNPs, LPNs, PAs, etc., maintenance, correctional industry crews and mental health workers in all classifications.

I don't think anyone would disagree that prison workers are part of our public safety system. All of these folks work directly in contact with inmates and have responsibilities for safety and security within the prison. Even, for example, the office assistant in the mental health clinic in the prison is responsible for the security of that area when inmates are waiting to see the mental health professionals. We would like to see this population addressed in PSERS in order to recognize the injury rate data and public safety nature of their work.

Secondly, 911 operators are another narrow category we'd like to see addressed in some way. These folks sit next to dispatchers in the fire system who are in LEOFF – they are definitely a key part of our public safety system.

And third, the service worker category within schools stands out in the injury data as well. We would note this category includes school security officers who are badged and armed with mace and tasers and security service officers who are badged and armed with guns. They have police academy or equivalent training. It would likely make sense for these categories to also be considered for PSERS while the other categories of service works should be addressed in some way, like retaining early retirement factors, given the injury data that shows them above the general population.

Thank you very much for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Majken Ryherd
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