



KING COUNTY CORRECTIONS GUILD

May 15, 2018

TO: Members of the Select Committee on Pension Policy
FM: Dave Richardson, President
RE: Please Support SB 6370 – Restoring the 5 Year Retirement Differential Between PERS2 and PSERS

We wish to thank Senator Hobbs for sponsoring SB 6370, and you for considering it. Corrections Officers perform one of the most stressful, difficult jobs in our society. According to a recent article in American Jails Magazine:

http://b.3cdn.net/crjustice/18f06b13023d159397_izm6bnoax.pdf :

- The life expectancy of someone living in the United States is 77 years of age – this drops to 59 years of age for corrections officers.
- The suicide rate for CO's is 39% higher than the average of other occupations.
- 33.5% of all assaults in prisons and jails are committed by inmates against staff.
- On average, a CO will live only 18 months after retirement.
- A CO will likely be seriously assaulted at least twice in a 20-year career.
- According to a 2011 survey, 27% of corrections employees meet the criteria for PTSD.

Washington State allows police and fire fighters (members of LEOFF2) to retire at age 53, but asks Corrections Officers who are members of PERS2 to work until age 62. In 2004 the Legislature created PSERS for law enforcement personnel not eligible for LEOFF, and encouraged Corrections Officers to join the new system with the promise of a retirement age five years earlier than PERS2. That gap, however, has eroded. Section 1 of the bill offers a perfect summary of the issue:

The legislature finds that in 2004 when the public safety employees' retirement system was created the retirement age was five years earlier than the retirement age of members of the public employees' retirement system plan 2. The legislature further finds that in 2013 the alternate early retirement age that a member of the public employees' retirement system plan 2 could retire without a reduction to their benefit was reduced from 65 to 62. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to change the unreduced retirement age for members of the public safety employees' retirement system that became members prior to May 1, 2013, from 60 to 57 to reinstate the five year age between the systems

Restoring this five year differential between PERS2 and PSERS will be a modest, but important step forward in terms of providing those who protect public safety the retirement they deserve.