



TESTIMONY OF
Sarah LaFrenz, President
KANSAS ORGANIZATION OF STATE EMPLOYEES
February 20, 2019

Chairman Kelly and Members of the House Financial Institutions and Pensions Committee,

As President of the Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE), I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 2139, which permit eligible local adult and juvenile corrections employees to affiliate with the Kansas Police and Firemen's Retirement System (KP&F). We believe it is important to allow law enforcement professionals who provide important service in order to keep our citizens and communities safe appropriate retirement benefit opportunities.

As the Legislature considers HB 2139, KOSE respectfully requests you also give due consideration to also allow for State Corrections Officers to affiliate with KP&F, either as part of this bill or as a separate piece of legislation. Our Corrections Officers do a fine job of making the state prison facilities operate in a professional manner under very trying circumstances working long hours for little pay. As recently indicated by Corrections Secretary Roger Werholtz, the Department and its' employees are operating under extremely difficult conditions.

Furthermore, as recent events suggest, the state's correctional system is at a serious tipping point regarding staffing levels. Providing this enhanced retirement benefit would go a long way to improving morale and retaining and recruiting good employees. It will also send a clear message that the Legislature is serious about addressing this critical issue.

The idea of moving State Corrections Officers into KP&F is long-overdue. As you may recall, during the 2018 Kansas Legislative Session, the Kansas House of Representatives on several occasions advanced the concept over to the Senate. The original bill (2018 HB 2448) passed the House on February 21, 2018 on a Final Action vote of 113-9. Unfortunately, the measure did not make it to the Governor's desk.

While there is not a current fiscal note yet published for moving Corrections Officers under KP&F, the fiscal impact of last year's bill was modest in relation to the overall budget. What's more, what price is too high to ensure the safety of our citizens, our communities and our dedicated state corrections officers?

It is also worth mentioning that the 2018 Joint Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice Oversight, noting comments from Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) employees regarding the difficulties presented by the current level of pay and benefits, recommended in its' report to the 2019 Legislature that this change for facility correction officers be made.

With all the above in mind, on behalf of KOSE, I sincerely hope you will consider the merits of moving State Corrections Officers into the KP&F retirement system during the 2019 Legislative Session. I would be happy to provide additional information to the committee upon request.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this written testimony.

The Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE) is a union for executive branch state employees, and the largest union of state employees in Kansas. All non-supervisory, non-confidential employees in the executive branch of Kansas state government (exclusive of higher education) are eligible to join KOSE. KOSE is local 300 - dually affiliated with both AFT and AFSCME. info@koseunion.org