



February 15, 2017

Senator Kathleen Taylor, Chair
Senate Committee on Workforce
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Taylor and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the over 800 City of Portland employees represented by the Professional and Technical Employees (PTE) Local 17, I write today in opposition to Senate Bills 559 and 560.

Our members are a diverse group of skilled workers including engineers, planners, information technology professionals, and technicians. They have dedicated their lives to public service, often forgoing higher wages in the private sector because of their commitment to building their community. We believe that dramatically cutting benefits that they have come to expect in order to reduce gaps in the public retirement system is a disservice to those who have answered the call of public service.

Our members are not blind to the problems that Oregon's public retirement system faces, but they are also aware of the harm that cuts to benefits will cause not just to them, but to the future of Oregon's public sector workforce. Because of the upcoming wave of retirements and necessary hiring that will occur to fill these vacated positions, we believe that reducing retirement benefits will cause significant difficulties in Oregon public employers' ability to compete for the best qualified talent in skilled professions. The employees that we represent have many options when seeking employment, and a competitive benefits package is critical to attracting the next generation of skilled labor to work for our cities, counties and state agencies.

Oregon does itself no favors by reducing the standard of living for thousands of future retirees and reducing the incentives for the next generation to join the public workforce. We urge you to oppose SB 559 and SB 560 and instead work to find solutions that will lay the groundwork for the future of our state's investment in a skilled and devoted public servants.

Sincerely,

Elliot Levin
Research Director and Legislative Advocate
Professional and Technical Employees Local 17

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