



TO: SENATE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND INSURANCE COMMITTEE
Sen. Jeff Longbine, Chairman

FROM: KANSAS ORGANIZATION OF STATE EMPLOYEES (KOSE)
Sarah LaFrenz, President

RE: WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 505

DATE: March 5, 2024

Chairman Longbine and Members of the Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee:

As President of the Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE), I appreciate the opportunity to provide written only testimony in support of SB 505, which would enhance the retirement benefit for State Corrections Officers. For years, and even decades, KOSE has strongly advocated for improving pensions for our front-line corrections officers who work every day to keep our state and community safe. I would like to commend Sen. Pittman for his interest in this issue and for introducing the legislation on behalf of corrections officers across the state.

While we have long advocated that moving State Corrections Officers into the Kansas Police and Firemen's Retirement System (KP&F) was a good way to address this objective, we believe SB 505 is a good alternative approach to improving the retirement benefit, while addressing concerns we have heard from policymakers over the years about moving corrections officers into KP&F. By simply adjusting the multiplier within the existing Corrections tier retirement plan to 2% as proposed by SB 505, lawmakers can move us in the right direction to improve the retirement benefit for corrections officers without causing adverse financial burden for the state budget, or dramatically impacting the KPERS Unfunded Actuarial Liability (UAL).

Our Corrections Officers do an outstanding job of making the state prison facilities operate in a professional manner under very trying circumstances working long hours for little pay. As testimony of related bills proposed in recent sessions have, the Department and its' employees are operating under extremely difficult conditions. We believe it is important to allow law enforcement professionals, who provide important service to keep our citizens and communities safe, the retirement benefit opportunities they deserve. Providing this modest, enhanced retirement benefit would go a long way to improving morale as well as the recruitment and retention of good employees.

The idea of improving State Corrections Officers retirement benefits is long-overdue. The idea has literally been studied by standing and interim committees of this Legislature for decades.

Now that the state has a budget surplus, the time has come for this issue to be appropriately considered and addressed.

Numerous bills have been introduced to accomplish this goal over time. As recently as the 2018 Legislative Session, a bill to move Corrections Officers into KP&F actually passed the House on a vote of 113-9. Unfortunately, the measure did not make it to the Governor's desk. SB 505 gives the Legislature a fresh opportunity and a new approach to consider. We hope you will take advantage of this new concept which approaches this challenge in a new and reasonable way, in a time when the budget resources are available, and pass SB 505 favorably.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this testimony.