



Testimony before the
Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee SB 135
Mike Scribner, President
Teamsters Local Union 696

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Support for Moving State Corrections Officers into KP&F

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Mike Scribner and I am President and Business Agent at Teamsters Local Union 696, which represents more than 1,000 members in Kansas, which includes all of the Juvenile Corrections Officers for the State of Kansas. Also, I was a correctional officer for 22 years before becoming the President of Teamsters Local 696

It is the position of Teamsters Local 696 that security officers of the Kansas Department of Corrections should be provided membership in the Kansas Police and Firemen's Retirement System (KP&F). With the crisis that we see in corrections staffing and widespread effects in our facilities, raising the benefits of corrections officers is the smart thing to do. Such a proposal is sorely needed and long overdue.

According to data provided by the KS Department of Corrections the average turnover rate for all facilities is 32.52%, with some facilities reaching as high as 46.11%. 52.97% of all Correctional Officer I's length of service is under 2 years. This has caused understaffing at multiple facilities and has directly led to the riots and crisis's we saw in El Dorado and at Norton in 2018.

Here in Shawnee County the starting wage for a Correctional Officer with the county is \$19.23 with a funded step increase and cost of living adjustment every year. It is even higher in some other places like Johnson County being \$21.50 and Wyandotte County being \$18.15, with a lot of those officers being on KP&F. The starting wage for a Correctional Officer with the state, both adult and juvenile is \$18.35. The state needs a more competitive edge in order to attract and keep employees. Going to KP&F for all correctional officers will do that.

The job of a correctional officer is physically and mentally stressful and hard on employees. According to articles, the risk of suicide among corrections officers is 39% higher than the rest of the working population. And research has found that 44% experience some form of post-traumatic stress disorder, while 27% met the criteria for full PTSD. Of all U.S. workers, correctional officers have one of the highest rates of nonfatal, work-related injuries. KP&F would provide these officers with a better path to retirement, one that is sorely needed. It is our position that Correctional Officers should have been on KP&F the entire time.

Our members and employees of the state are excited about the possibility of this proposal. Make no mistake, it would be life changing for Correctional Officers with the state of Kansas. And it would give the state the competitive edge it needs to hire and retain staff, thus making our facilities safer and better places to work. Thank you for your time. I would be available to answer questions at the appropriate time.