



March 22, 2021

Appropriations Committee – Opposition to:

HB 5149 AN ACT EXCLUDING REIMBURSEMENTS TO STATE EMPLOYEES FOR MILEAGE AND PAYMENTS FOR OVERTIME FROM THE CALCULATION OF RETIREMENT INCOME.

HB 5209 AN ACT EXCLUDING OVERTIME PAY AND LEGISLATIVE MILEAGE ALLOWANCES FROM THE CALCULATION OF STATE PENSIONS.

HB 5750 AN ACT EXCLUDING REIMBURSEMENTS FOR MILEAGE AND PAYMENTS FOR OVERTIME FROM THE CALCULATION OF RETIREMENT INCOME.

HB 5754 AN ACT EXCLUDING MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENTS AND OVERTIME PAY FROM THE CALCULATION OF RETIREMENT INCOME.

Chairman Osten, Chairman Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Sean Howard. I'm the President of AFSCME Local 387. I'm testifying on behalf of Corrections Locals 387, 1565, 391 and Council 4 which represent 4,200 state corrections employees.

Our union strongly opposes House Bills 5149, 5209, 5750 and 5754. These bills take over time wages out of the state employee pension calculations.

Pensions should be based on true income, not fiction. The baseline contract wage number for corrections employees, police officers, firefighters, hospital workers and others is fiction.

Overtime is managed not by rank and file state employees, but by managers. A Correction Officer, for example, doesn't have the ability to work any overtime without the express approval or direction of management. With the state workforce now being as small as it was in 1960, it's no surprise that in recent years more overtime has been required to effectively deliver public services. If agency management cannot fulfill the state's obligations without employing the use of overtime, workers should not be penalized for those decisions. In addition, there is a difference between agency managers seeking volunteers to work overtime and employees who are mandated to work overtime. Volunteer employees have a choice. Mandated employees do not.

We must recognize that in certain sectors – law enforcement, healthcare, corrections, transportation, etc. – overtime will always be required because public safety is at stake. Refusing to recognize the full scope of an employee’s work at retirement unfairly punishes those who had no choice in the matter. After a year of serving on the frontlines of the greatest public health crisis in a hundred years, now is not the time to penalize these heroes.

When our members work overtime their work/life balance expands and changes. Time with their children is cut short, that’s time that can never be regained. Birthdays, anniversaries, graduations slip by, but these workers continue to do what needs to be done, answering the call of duty. It’s morally wrong, at the end of their career, to then say, “Hey, we’re going to pretend that we only paid you for forty hours of work each week during your career, now that you’re retiring.”

It’s wrong to penalize our members by denying them a pension based on true income.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of our members.

