

Testimony IN OPPOSITION to HB 2391

Before the House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development

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March 19, 2015

Chairman Hutton and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Derrick Baxter and I have worked for the Department of Corrections for two years. Prior to that, I worked for another state agency for six years, so I have a total of eight years of service. Today I am speaking to you as a private citizen, and not as a representative of any state agency. I am asking you to vote against HB 2391.

Shared Leave

I am a single father. I have not yet had need for shared leave, but I would like to think that if one of my children became ill shared leave would be an option. Making shared leave available only in the case of life-threatening conditions or illnesses means it would not be available to a single parent trying to handle a child's illness that is serious, but not life-threatening. During his inaugural address, our governor emphasized the importance of the family. If we as state employees are to value our families and protect our families, we need to have the ability to care for our families when they are ill, and not just when they are in danger of death. Shared leave is already limited to the most serious conditions and is only available when all other forms of leave are exhausted. Limiting shared leave further just makes it more difficult for employees to handle employees who are already struggling. It's like kicking someone when they are already down.

Longevity Pay

I work in a corrections environment where many employees leave before even completing their probationary period. We do not have regular raises, our benefit costs regularly increase, and there are very few incentives for employees to stay with the State. No one hired since 2008 is even eligible for a longevity bonus, so cutting the longevity guarantee hurts only the long-term workers. From my perspective, these experienced people are the ones the state should be looking to keep. It makes no sense to penalize the most experienced members of the State workforce.

The Classified System

The classified system provides due process rights. Without due process, state workers can be fired for any reason, or for no reason at all. Workers who are strong performers could be fired because they belong to the "wrong" political party or simply because they don't see eye to eye with a supervisor. Our work environment is already stressful enough. Completely eliminating all due process protections would make it even more

stressful. An inmate could make an allegation against an officer, and the officer could simply be fired without ever getting to tell his or her side of the story. Without due process, the officer would not have any right to be heard, or to appeal the firing.

State employees perform valuable, necessary services. We work tough jobs for relatively low pay. Help us keep some of the few protections and benefits we have by voting against HB 2391. Thank you for your time; I will answer any questions you have.