

**Testimony In Support of Senate Bill 505**  
**David Gorges**  
**Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee**  
**March 5, 2024**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 505. I am David Gorges and I am currently a Corrections Counselor at the Hutchinson Correctional Facility, a position I've been in since April 2013. Before that I spent 4 years as a Corrections Officer at Hutchinson Correctional Facility. And, prior to my work with KDOC, I was a police officer for 18 years. I have a unique perspective to share with you today on how important passage of SB 505 would be to corrections staff throughout the system.

As you know, our correctional facilities have been plagued by chronic understaffing. Obviously, part of this can be attributed to stagnant wages that have failed to keep pace with similar job markets. I want to extend my appreciation to the Legislature for taking steps in the last few years to address this issue.

However, the inadequacy of pensions for front-line corrections officers has also played a significant role in the difficulty with recruitment and retention of skilled employees in our correctional facilities.

For years, corrections officers have sought to be included in the Kansas Police and Firemen's Retirement System (KP&F). We saw this as a reasonable way to help address recruitment and retainment issues. I know there are some concerns among legislators regarding moving corrections officers into KP&F, ranging from the impact on the KPERS Unfunded Actuarial Liability (UAL) to the differences between corrections officers and police officers.

Senate Bill 505 is a good approach to improving the retirement benefit for corrections officers, while taking into account those concerns from policymakers about moving corrections officers into KP&F. By simply adjusting the multiplier within the existing Corrections tier retirement plan to 2%, you can move us in the right direction to improve the retirement benefit for our corrections officers without causing adverse financial burden on the state budget, or dramatically impacting the KPERS UAL.

The work of our Corrections Officers is hard. I can tell you that first-hand. They do an outstanding job under very trying circumstances. They are simply looking for partners. Partners that will acknowledge the work that they do every day to keep our communities safe. Partners that that will work with them, through legislation like Senate Bill 505, to improve their working conditions and their futures.

I can't tell you how many conversations I have had with my colleagues about the difficulties they face every day on the job. How much longer they can hang on? Is it worth it? Ultimately, for most, they decide the work is too important and their service to the state too great to leave. But again, they are just looking for some help from you and SB 505 gives you an opportunity to provide it.

I hope you will take advantage of this new approach to improving the retirement of corrections officers. This is long overdue. We welcome you as partners and encourage you to pass SB 505 favorably.

Mr. Chairman and honorable members of the committee, thank you very much for your consideration of this testimony.