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Kansas Dept. of Corrections, Lansing Correctional Facility

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Financial Institutions & Insurance committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of SB 135 which would add Corrections staff to the KP&F retirement plan.

I started my career at KDOC in 2002 when I was 30 years old. I have been a faithful employee working on both the security side and administrative side of the facility. I have been a Captain and more recently am in the position of Unit Team Manager managing the 512 minimum compound. I am currently required to respond to any security issues that arise in my vicinity and if/when second responders are called to the central compound. That puts in immediate danger. I have performed CPR on offenders, placed combative offenders in handcuffs to include offenders that have battered staff or used weapons on others. We are considered first responders and are not able to work from home during Covid because of this. I personally was hospitalized with Covid and was out of work for over 2 months, thanks be to God that I survived Covid however I am still dealing with the lasting effects and have had to see a lung specialist.

We need to be considered the same as fireman and police when it comes to retirement. We are in danger if not the same as these officers, public servants, if not more so. The people we deal with every day are convicted felons, the ones the public has rejected and placed in prison because their behavior is viewed as too dangerous to be in the community. These individuals continue to victimize staff and other offenders while they are in prison which makes this job very dangerous but yet we run into the building or fight when most people would be running away. We risk being recognized and harmed by released offenders as well. We receive death threats and get battered while performing our duties. We need the ability to retire at a reasonable age with a full retirement verses hanging on because we can't afford to leave but risk being hurt because we are too old to really protect ourselves.

In conclusion, I urge you to work SB 135 and pass it favorably out of committee. I would hope you include anyone that works on the compounds such as Unit Team Managers, Unit Team Supervisors, Corrections Counselors as well as uniformed staff. I also believe you should include Juvenile Corrections in this.

Thank you listening and thank you for having a hearing on this subject.

Sincerely,

Gina Howlett

SENATE FI & I COMMITTEE
DATE: 2/23/2021
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