

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1949

As Passed House:

February 7, 2024

Title: An act relating to including in the public safety employees' retirement system specified competency restoration workers at department of social and health services institutional and residential sites that serve civilly committed residents or serve patients under not guilty by reason of insanity findings.

Brief Description: Including in the public safety employees' retirement system specified competency restoration workers at department of social and health services institutional and residential sites that serve civilly committed residents or serve patients under not guilty by reason of insanity findings.

Sponsors: Representatives Leavitt, Schmidt, Ryu, Callan, Doglio, Reed, Ormsby, Fosse, Reeves and Davis; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 1/15/24, 1/18/24 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/7/24, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides membership in the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System for employees of eligible employers at institutions or residential sites that serve civilly committed residents, or serve patients under not guilty by reason of insanity findings.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Corry, Ranking Minority

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Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Connors, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Callan, Chandler, Chopp, Davis, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Harris, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Rude, Ryu, Sandlin, Schmick, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Stokesbary, Stonier, Tharinger and Wilcox.

Staff: David Pringle (786-7310).

Background:

The Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) was created in 2004 and opened to members on July 1, 2006. The PSERS provides retirement benefits for state and local government employees who work in positions with law enforcement duties but are not eligible for membership in the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System, and for other workers that have a primary responsibility to provide nursing care, custody, and safety at specified state institutions. Members of the PSERS with at least 20 years of service will be eligible for full retirement benefits from age 60, five years earlier than the regular retirement age in Public Employees' Retirement System Plans 2 and 3. Members of the PSERS with 20 years of service may also opt for early retirement beginning at age 53 with a 3 percent reduction in benefits per year of early retirement.

Membership in the PSERS is restricted by an individual's employer and by specific job criteria. The PSERS employers are defined as the Department of Corrections, the Department of Natural Resources, the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Gambling Commission, the Washington State Patrol, the Liquor Control Board, county corrections departments, and the corrections departments of municipalities not classified as first class cities.

In 2018 the PSERS was amended to add the Department of Social and Health Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs to the list of employers and to expand the types of employees working for eligible employers that are eligible for the PSERS to employees whose primary responsibility is to provide nursing care or to ensure the custody or safety of offender and patient populations. In 2020 the PSERS was amended again to add employees at institutions and residential sites that perform competency restoration services.

Summary of Bill:

The type of institution or residential site at which a PSERS employer's employees are eligible for participation in the PSERS is expanded to include institutions or residential sites that serve civilly committed residents, or serve patients under not guilty by reason of insanity findings.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect June 1, 2025.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There are members of the Service Employees' International Union covered by the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) now that are doing very similar jobs to the workers covered by this bill. This is an important change in benefits for employees doing competency restoration work in challenging environments. When PSERS was expanded last time, the Special Commitment Center should have been included.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Kevin Bovenkamp, Department of Social and Health Services Behavioral Health Administration; Dane Austreng, Service Employees International Union 1199NW; and Dennis Eagle, Washington Federation of State Employees.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.