

Testimony – HB 1183
House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
January 20, 2023
By Cody Schulz
Director, ND Parks and Recreation

Good morning Chairman Schauer and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Cody Schulz. I am the Director of the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department. I offer this testimony in support of HB 1183.

North Dakota Parks and Recreation employs 26 sworn law enforcement officers. All of our Park Managers and Park Rangers are certified Peace Officers and skillfully fulfill all of the duties and responsibilities of law enforcement officers that are currently eligible to participate in this retirement plan. I offer the following excerpt of a 2017 report from the Congressional Research Service on the subject of “Retirement Benefits for Federal Law Enforcement Personnel.”

The duties of law enforcement personnel place unique physical and psychological demands on individuals employed in those positions. Because physical and mental health decline with age, Congress deemed it necessary to maintain a youthful workforce to ensure the quality of law enforcement services. Law enforcement personnel are subject to a mandatory retirement age to maintain this goal, which leads to an expectation of limited federal service for these employees. Consequently, Congress has established enhanced retirement benefits for individuals in these occupations.

The provision of enhanced retirement benefits for law enforcement personnel was initially implemented with two primary intentions. The first was to create a retirement system under which it is financially reasonable for officers to retire at an earlier age with fewer years of service than regular civilian federal employees. Second, the enhanced retirement benefits, which encourage entry at a young age, continuous service, and early retirement, are intended to help maintain a young and vigorous federal law enforcement workforce.

In addition to the benefits to the workforce and public we serve detailed above, I believe this bill would also help in recruiting and retention of team members. In many cases we are competing for the same candidates as county sheriff's offices and city police departments who already offer this retirement benefit to their sworn officers. Having this benefit certainly be a recruiting tool to attract law enforcement officers from states that are not as friendly and supportive of law enforcement as North Dakota.

On behalf of North Dakota Parks and Recreation, I recommend HB 1183 receive a Do Pass.

Thank you for your time; I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.