

Government and Veteran's Affairs Committee
Senate Bill 2043 Testimony
March 19, 2021

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Captain Jody Skogen and I serve as the Administrative Services Commander for the North Dakota Highway Patrol. I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 2043.

Senate Bill 2043 would increase employer contributions for the highway patrol's retirement plan by 2% each year during the next biennium. These additional contributions have been proposed to correct a projected deficit identified during the current actuarial conducted by NDPERS.

I'd like to share some of the characteristics of why our plan is unique. State troopers do not receive social security credit for their years of service, and therefore our only employer-supported retirement system is the PERS plan. The Highway Patrol does not pay the 6.2% social security tax for 159 state troopers, and that's one reason why employer contributions toward PERS are higher compared to the main plan.

Troopers are required to work ten years to become vested, while employees on the main plan are vested after 36 months. The highway patrol plan uses a rule of 80, and there is a mandatory retirement at 60 years of age. These differ from the main plan, but I feel they're important because troopers work varying shifts (nights, weekends, and holidays) which become more difficult with age.

Troopers take call and respond to emergencies after-hours (e.g., crashes in the middle of the night during winter storms). They experience cumulative stress, psychological trauma, and disruption in circadian rhythm as the years progress. It is

important for troopers to maintain excellent physical condition to perform core duties. These duties can range from changing a tire to apprehending suspects whose intent is to do harm. Troopers of every age are required to complete demanding physical training, and despite every precaution injuries are still common.

The highway patrol's retirement system serves as a powerful recruitment and retention tool, and I know many hardworking troopers stay with our agency in order to reach their retirement eligibility date. After they retire, many of our employees continue to serve their communities in other types of roles.

The men and women of the Highway Patrol, both current as well as retired, appreciate your consideration as you review the recommendations offered by NDPERS. This completes my testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.