

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the House Appropriations Committee.

My name is Austen Schauer representing District 13 in West Fargo.

**House Bill 1309** received the full blessing of the **Employee Benefits Program Committee** and the **GVA Committee**.

We now seek **your** blessing.

**HB 1309** was introduced on behalf of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation who is our state's law enforcement agency that supports all other law enforcement agencies.

BCI agents play an integral role in investigating homicides, suicides, officer involved shootings, sexual assaults, fraud, cybercrimes, sexual exploitation of minors and intervening in major illicit drug operations throughout the state.

**House Bill 1309** adjusts the retirement benefits for BCI agents in the following ways:

- **Section 1** increases the vesting period to 10 years of service, up from three years of service for current agents.
- **Section 2** provides a multiplier of *three* for new and currently hired agents for their first 20 years of service.

For any years of service *beyond* 20 years, the multiplier is reduced to 1.75, which would be compatible with the ND PERS Public Safety Plan's current agents' multiplier.

The goal is to allow BCI agents to retire with approximately 60% of their salary **after 20 years** of active service which is typically around the age of 55.

Under the current 1.75 multiplier, an agent hired at age 34 would have to work until **68** to achieve 60% retirement benefit.

The intent of **HB 1309** is to balance the reality of required experience of BCI agents with the physicality of the job impacting agents who are 55 or older.

The average age of when a BCI agent begins his career is 34.

That's because agents are required to have a **four-year bachelor's degree** and a **minimum** of five years of **investigative** experience.

You may be concerned that a change to the BCI Retirement Benefit Plan may lead to a shortfall like the main PERS plan.

However, a study conducted by the University of Buffalo says the average age of law enforcement deaths is between 58 and 61 years old.

**The fiscal note of \$1.1 million per biennium** would come from the Attorney General although the AG has already included \$543 thousand in its budget to cover the cost of the BCI multiplier.

The essence of **HB 1309** is providing a framework for agents to maximize their skills professionally while providing retirement benefits when needed the most.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and committee members.