

Testimony Prepared for the  
**House Political Subdivisions Committee**

January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

By: Trent Wangen, Major

**RE: Supportive Testimony for House Bill 1177- The definition of correctional officer for purposes of the public employees retirement system.**

My name is Trent Wangen and I currently serve as a Major with the Burleigh County Sheriff's Department. My primary duty is to serve as the Assistant Jail Administrator of the Burleigh Morton Detention Center, a 555 bed facility located in Bismarck.

I am testifying in support of HB1177, the definition of correctional officer for purpose of the public employees retirement system.

Currently correctional officers hired by Burleigh County must be enrolled in the NDPERS Defined Contribution Plan until completion of the required training/certification. After completion of training/certification the correctional officers are then enrolled into the Public Safety Retirement Plan. Normally this training/certification process takes Burleigh County approximately 30 days. North Dakota Correctional Facility Standards require correctional officers to complete the required training within their first year of employment.

Peace Officers and Firefighters are eligible to enroll in the Public Safety Retirement Plan upon being hired and prior to being licensed, certified or trained.

When Burleigh County hires deputy sheriffs and correctional officers at the same time both groups attend approximately 2 weeks of training together. There are several similarities of job duties between correctional officers and deputy sheriffs. While attending the exact same training as classmates correctional officers are currently not eligible to enroll in the Public Safety Retirement Plan until completion of the required training while the deputy sheriffs are eligible upon being hired.

The proposed amendment would save time for both Burleigh County and NDPERS by eliminating the need to enroll correctional officers into the Defined Contribution Plan to only enroll the correctional officer into the Public Safety Plan at a later time.

I feel correctional officers deserve the same retirement benefits upon hire as other public safety officers receive.

Thank you for your time and consideration and please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Trent Wangen, Major

Burleigh County Sheriff's Department

