



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2025

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### **First Responders Qualify for Disability Benefits in More Circumstances Under Oregon Senate Bill Passed Today**

*Senate Bill 588 recognizes the mental, emotional, and physical tolls police and firefighters face*

**SALEM, OR** – An Oregon Senate bill passed today outlines new criteria for police officers and firefighters to qualify for disability benefits within the Public Employees Retirement System.

“We are talking about first responders: Individuals who stood in the line of fire, rushed into burning buildings, and put their lives on the line to protect our communities,” said **Senator Mark Meek (D – Happy Valley)**, a chief sponsor of the bill. “When their service takes a toll—when their injuries force them out of the profession they dedicated their lives to—we owe it to them to provide the benefits they earned.”

Under Senate Bill 588, people in these careers can qualify for disability benefits when an on-the-job injury causes an ongoing mental or physical condition that makes them unable to carry out their job duties. Police and firefighters who have been on the job for 10 years or more can qualify for benefits under the bill even if their ongoing condition is not clearly a result of their actions on the job. The legislation also sets standards for timely hearing of appeals.

Right now, disability benefits for public employees apply when a worker’s condition makes them unable to perform any work they are qualified to do, not necessarily the job they had when they became disabled. That criteria stays in place for workers other than police and firefighters.

The Senate vote was unanimous to pass the bill. The measure now goes to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

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