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**Testimony to the Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee
In Support of HB2196
March 9, 2023**

Chairman Longbine and Committee Members:

Our associations strongly support HB2196 which will expand the availability of the Deferred Retirement Option Program as an option for all KP&F employers. As you know, currently the DROP is only offered to the KBI and the KHP.

Our agencies are experiencing unprecedented challenges in recruiting and hiring qualified candidates for law enforcement. These challenges have led to many of our agencies having unfilled line officer positions. The DROP is about retaining current employees longer resulting in fewer vacancies. It encourages our retirement eligible employees to stay longer by mutual agreement with the employer to delay their retirement.

Participation in the program is optional for both employees and employers. While there is a potential for a slight increase in the employer contribution, it appears to be more likely to be small if there is any. If there is an increase in employer contributions, shouldn't all employers paying that increase be able to choose to participate in the program?

One question frequently asked about DROP is whether it actually reduces vacancies at the street officer level. The answer to that is a definite yes. While DROP can only apply to senior officers eligible to retire, many of those officers are street level officers or supervisors. Regardless of rank or tenure, a vacancy created by any officer leaving an agency usually means a vacancy at the street level. This is because the span of control within an agency must be maintained to ensure proper supervision and guidance is available throughout the agency structure.

We believe the DROP will help in reducing vacancies and help to maintain adequate staffing to address the rising rate of violent crime. But there is another benefit to the DROP. That is supporting those officers who have invested their entire career to the safety of their communities. Often putting their safety at risk as they stand between our law-abiding citizens and those who want to victimize them. These officers and their families have made great personal sacrifices throughout their career. While helping their agencies avoid understaffing by staying longer, the financial incentive created shows support for what they and their families have done.

We ask you to please move HB2196 forward favorably.

Ed Klumpp
Legislative Liaison