



AFSCME Opposes SB 1049 and the proposed cuts to Public Employees' Retirement Benefits.

Good afternoon.

I am Elizabeth Goetzinger, an OPSRP PERS member and president of my union AFSCME Local 3580 representing the employees of Metro Regional Government.

This afternoon I want to tell you the story of Melissa. She is an hourly wage worker at the Oregon Convention Center and a Tier 2 PERS member. Melissa is raising her three boys on her wages and benefits from the Convention Center. A single mom, she can "make it happen", make ends meet, with one job right now, but just barely.

Melissa works the swing shift - late afternoon to really late at night. It's a shift that pays a bit more than others. The extra bit of pay can mean a full tank of gas all month or getting athletic fees paid for one of her sons.

She is barely getting by and the proposed cuts in Senate Bill 1049 make Melissa's and her sons' futures harder and I have to ask you if that is fair. Why is the burden being put on working people who have been given a promise of a secure retirement?

Melissa's job is hard. She is setting up chairs, tables, stages, dance floors and making the events and conferences at the Convention Center a safe, clean and world class experience for the hundreds of thousands of visitors that come to our state every year. She uses her physical labor to get the job done. Sometimes, probably too often, her body hurts- she's been doing this work for well over 15 years.

The work is hard but she enjoys it. Melissa loves to see all the different types of people come to conferences and events, she loves working with her colleagues, she loves a job well done.

About a year ago Melissa and her three boys were hit with a drastic rent hike. She scrambled to pull money together to keep her apartment but couldn't sustain the financial pressure. Too soon she found herself putting things in storage, asking favors of friends and family for spare bedrooms and couches to sleep on, and some nights having to live out of her minivan with her three sons.

She worked tirelessly to find an affordable place to call home. Our union, was working hard too, trying to minimize as much as we could the impact on her and her kids. It was a really scare time for Melissa, a full time, long standing public service worker who was facing homelessness.

Melissa did find a new home but it was really hard. The commute is longer, its not as affordable but she is still just barely making it.



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When Melissa and I were talking yesterday about the decisions you have in front of you she asked me "Don't they understand that we are barely making it? She said, "Elizabeth please make sure they know this really isn't about me, its about my boys."

You see, Melissa doesn't see her retirement for herself, she sees it as stability for the future of her three sons.

Senate Bill 1049 is not the solution and we know it, you know it. The solution should not be taking away benefits of workers like Melissa and really impacting her and her sons' future. You can do better. Public service work should not be part of the race to the bottom.