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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
and Drafting

Legislative Budget
Office

H.B. 261
135th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 261's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Patton and Sweeney

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: Yes

Ruhaiza Ridzwan, Senior Economist

Highlights

- The bill allows an Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) member, who is employed full-time as an emergency medical services worker, to elect to shift into the OPERS public safety division. It also automatically classifies any newly hired employee with similar characteristics under the OPERS public safety division.
- Applicable local governments will incur additional personnel costs, due to the higher employer contribution rate for public safety members of OPERS. In the first full year of the bill's effect, the statewide cost increase would total an amount roughly between \$3.5 million and \$5.9 million.

Detailed Analysis

The bill would allow an Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) member who, on the bill's effective date, is both certified by the State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire, and Transportation Services (EMFTS) and employed full time as an emergency medical services worker, to elect to shift into the OPERS public safety division from the OPERS regular state and local divisions, as categorized under current law.¹ If such a member makes that election, service credit earned before the election would not be considered service credit as an OPERS public safety officer. The bill also classifies a new OPERS member who becomes certified and employed

¹ The bill applies to first responders including Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs), Emergency Medical Technicians – Basic (EMTs), Emergency Medical Technicians – Intermediate (which is also called an Advanced Emergency Medical Technician, or AEMT), and Emergency Medical Technicians – Paramedic.

full time after the effective date as an emergency medical services worker in the OPERS public safety division.

Fiscal effect

The bill would increase personnel costs for local governments that employ such individuals, due to the higher employer contribution rate for public safety members of OPERS. Such costs would increase by roughly between \$3.5 million and \$5.9 million statewide in the first full year after the bill's effective date, assuming all current OPERS members who are employed full time as an emergency medical services worker subsequently elected to participate in the OPERS public safety division. The estimation methodology and source information are further described below. The actual costs could be lower or higher than the estimated amounts due to limited details on the number of emergency medical services workers and their wages.

Employee and employer contribution rates paid to OPERS differ depending on which OPERS division the employee is categorized. Employer contribution rates are shown in the table below. Emergency medical services workers are currently included under the OPERS regular division, with an employer contribution rate of 14.0% of such worker's pay. For any such workers that would shift into the OPERS public safety division, employers must contribute 18.1% of the worker's pay to OPERS.

OPERS Division	Employer Contribution Rates	Employee Contribution Rates
Local	14.00%	10.00%
State	14.00%	10.00%
Law Enforcement	18.10%	13.00%
Public Safety	18.10%	12.00%

The bill has no direct fiscal effect to the state. According to an official at the Department of Administrative Services, state agencies do not employ any full-time emergency medical services workers.

The number of current emergency medical services workers employed by a local government that would elect to participate in the public safety division, as well as the number of future such workers that would be hired by local governments are undetermined.² According to [active certification data](#), published by the Ohio Department of Public Safety's Division of Emergency Medical Services, a total of 14,152 individuals possessed the relevant credentials as of September 2023. Elsewhere, the May 2022 [State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates](#), derived from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), indicated there were a total of

² In the past, OPERS informed LBO that it does not collect information on its members' job classification.

8,550 emergency medical technicians and paramedics in Ohio.³ According to a separate BLS source, local governments employed about 25% of all EMTs and paramedics nationwide. The estimated number of emergency medical services workers who would be affected by the bill could range between 2,178 and 3,605.⁴ Based on Ohio-specific BLS data, medical technicians' and paramedics' annual median wages were \$35,370 and \$46,790, respectively, in 2022.

The estimated cost increase to local governments that employ such emergency medical services workers would be the difference between the employer contribution costs under the bill and the current employer contribution costs. Employer contribution costs under both scenarios were calculated by multiplying the estimated payroll of medical technicians and paramedics by the applicable employer contribution rates. The resulting difference attributed to the bill's provisions may roughly range between \$3.5 million and \$5.9 million in the initial year after the bill's effective date, assuming all of such workers elected to participate in the new division. The actual cost could be lower or higher than the estimated amounts, depending on the number of emergency medical services workers participating in the new division after the bill's effective date and their wages.

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³ The numbers are based on workers classified under the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code 29-2042 "emergency medical technicians" (5,310) and "paramedics" under SOC 29-2043 (3,240).

⁴ Of the lower number, approximately 825 are estimated to be paramedics and 1,353 to be emergency medical technicians. Of the higher number, 1,366 are paramedics and 2,239 are emergency medical technicians.