

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 438: AN ACT CONCERNING
REVISIONS TO THE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Osten and Rep. Walker, Vice-Chairs Senator Hartley, Rep. Dimassa, Rep. Horn, Ranking Members Senator Formica and Rep. Lavielle, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Bernhard Schreiber. I currently live in Mansfield Center, CT and taught at the Ashford School in Ashford, CT for 32 years before retiring in 2010. I am also a lifetime member of NEA-R and CEA-R.

I am in opposition to SB 438 unless amended. I am opposed to SB 438 unless it contains an amendment to include provisions for an Advisory Council to the TRB.

AMENDMENT:

“Add Language to SB 438 to create an Advisory Council composed of 8 retired teachers: 2 from each of the following retired teacher organizations the Association of Retired Teachers of Connecticut, the Connecticut Education Association-Retired, the AFT-Connecticut, and the Retired Teachers’ Healthcare Advocates. Each of the 8 Advisory Council members shall be enrolled in one of the TRB healthcare plans. The Advisory Council shall provide TRB with input on matters pertaining to retired teacher healthcare insurance and related evaluations prior to any final decisions by TRB. Also, the Advisory Council shall provide input relative to communications between TRB and its members. The Advisory Council will have sufficient time to meet prior to each TRB meeting, and be provided with the necessary information related to their function.”

- An Advisory Council insures input from a broad range of retired teachers because it includes some retired teacher organizations that have never been represented in the past.
- An Advisory Council creates a structure to improve communications between TRB and its members. One option among many is to revive the TRB newsletter called THE TRIB by providing volunteer work.

- It's an advantage to the TRB to hear retired teacher real world experience with healthcare matters before making decisions. Better input equals better outcomes.
- An Advisory Council recognizes that retired teachers deserve a voice to represent their contribution. With the help of active teachers, retired teachers pay on average 90% of the healthcare premium costs for their insurance. The State of Connecticut pays the balance. The full cost of TRB healthcare consultant and other professional fees is added to the premium charge.
- Retired teachers who attend public TRB meetings may not ask questions during the post-meeting comment period; this concern can be resolved with an Advisory Council serving as a go-between for this type of communication.
- Currently and for many years, only one board member of TRB was enrolled in a TRB healthcare plan. The Advisory Council would provide the TRB with the collective real world experience of retirees.
- When I served on the CT Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards (1990 to 1996), we drafted a Code of Professional Standards for Teachers, sent it to the CT Board of Education with our recommendation to adopt it. That Board accepted our recommendation, adopted the code of responsibility for teachers, and this code is still used and enforced to this day. An advisory council to the TRB can only enhance the TRB's deliberations just as CACTPS did for the State Board of Ed.

I urge all members of the Appropriations Committee to add this amendment to SB 438. Thank you for the work that you do on behalf of retired teachers and all Connecticut citizens.

Respectfully,
Bernhard Schreiber
Mansfield Center, CT