

Testimony in Support of SB 1082

March 25, 2021

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Osten and Rep. Walker, Vice-Chairs Senator Hartley, Rep. Dathan and Rep. Nolan, and Ranking Members Senator Miner and Rep. France, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Michael Duffek and I live in Newington CT. I am a retired CT teacher. I taught high school General Music at Windsor High School for 23 years, from 1994-2017.

I am writing in **SUPPORT** of **SB 1082: AN ACT CONCERNING A RETIRED TEACHER ADVISORY COUNCIL, THE MEMBERSHIP OF AND TERM LIMITS FOR THE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT BOARD, A CAP ON CERTAIN PROFESSIONAL FEES PAID BY THE BOARD, AND MEDICARE SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS FOR RETIRED TEACHERS.**

I support this bill because it addresses what I consider the most fundamental issue affecting me and my fellow retired teachers: accurate and appropriate representation. The item that provides the best opportunity for me to share my thoughts is establishing term limits on the TRB. As you know, the focus of public education changes yearly. Schools invest time and energy on targeted and timely Professional Development every year. The advent of the COVID pandemic this year has radically changed the way students are taught. Teachers and school systems are creating new educational structures on the spot, in response to immediate needs. Even though I am retired, I have spent a lot of time coaching my replacement and helping him create effective virtual education experiences for the students. I do this because I care about teaching, but more importantly, I do it because I can. I have the knowledge and recent experience of being in the classroom, of creating 21st century learning experience in an increasingly virtual world, and of working with today's students - the digital natives for whom this virtual world is the norm. I feel strongly that it is essential to have members on the TRB who have relatively recent experience in the classroom, and who are aware of and responsive to the needs of education in Connecticut and the world. This is why I feel establishing term limits for TRB members is appropriate, and in fact essential to fully serve Connecticut's educational systems.

I have outlined my feelings on one section of SB-1082, but I feel that my comments are appropriate to the entire bill. For example, it is important to add a third retired teacher to the TRB. The knowledge and energy that retired teachers continue to provide is an important resource, and should be acknowledged by the appropriate 4:3 ratio of active to retired teachers. It is important to always offer a Medicare Supplement plan. A supplement plan that does not cost the state any more money makes perfect sense. I am proud to have served the CT school system, and it is appropriate for the State to show that same pride to their retired teachers. Finally, establishing an Advisory Council of Retired teachers would ensure the continued support and active involvement of retired teachers as I outlined in my paragraph above.

I appreciate the Committee taking the time to consider my testimony, and I ask you to vote Yes in support SB 1082 for retired CT teachers. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Michael Duffek, Newington, CT.