

# Planning and Development Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5172

AN ACT CONCERNING REEMPLOYMENT AND THE MUNICIPAL

**Title:** EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM.

**Vote Date:** 3/18/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/25/2022

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning & Development Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill allows for retired police officers, receiving pensions through the Municipal Employee Retirement System (MERS), to continue to serve their communities without having to risk losing their retirement benefits, while also cutting costs for school districts. Currently, school districts are limited in their pool of candidates to serve as school security officers due to limits on the number of hours retired police officers can work while receiving retirement benefits through MERS. This bill would remove that restriction, which would allow police officers receiving retirement benefits through MERS to continue to receive their retirement benefits while also being compensated for their work.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Brian Anderson, Legislative Director, Council 4 AFSCME:** Mr. Anderson testified that the Council 4 AFSCME, which represents a union of 30,000 public and private employees as well as 2,000 Connecticut municipal police officers, urges support for this bill. Mr. Anderson stated that this bill would allow retired police officers, who have retired under the Municipal Employee Retirement System (MERS), to work in school districts that participate in the MERS. This would allow for school districts to employ retired police officers to work in schools and protect children, rather than candidates with less experience and training.

**Luke A. Bronin, Mayor, City of Hartford:** Mayor Bronin testified that this bill would allow municipalities to “gain access to qualified and experienced talent to fill urgent staffing needs.” By allowing retired personnel to gain employment with other Connecticut municipalities without risking their current retirement benefits, municipalities would receive highly qualified candidates to address staffing shortages while also lowering fiscal impact due to retirees not receiving a new MERS pension.

**Dr. Matt Conway, Superintendent, Derby Public Schools:** Dr. Conway testified that this bill would allow districts to “select the most qualified candidates to protect our children and staff.” The only people who are allowed to bring a weapon into a school are current or retired municipal, state, or military police officers. School Resource Officer programs are unduly costly and unaffordable for school districts, so instead, they hire retired police officers for School Security Officer positions. At present, retired police officers from a MERS town are only eligible to work 20 hours per week, versus retired police officers who come from a non-MERS town, who have no limit on the number of hours that they may work. This bill will allow school districts to hire full-time school security officers, instead of part-time workers, which lowers the cost of “hiring, initial and annual training, uniforms, and other employment-related requirements on an annual basis for the districts.”

**Rep. Nicole Klarides-Ditria, 105<sup>th</sup> District:** Rep. Klarides-Ditria urges support of this bill because it would allow retired municipal police and fire department employees to continue serving their communities, without having to worry about their retirement benefits being affected. Retirees that are employed by school districts would not be able to “double-dip” in MERS pensions, but rather would continue to receive their pension benefits, while also being compensated for their duties as defined by the school districts.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by: Jack Weitsen**

**Date: March 21, 2022**