

City of Austin
Craig Clark,
City Administrator



500 Fourth Avenue N.E.
Austin, Minnesota 55912-3773
Phone: 507-437-9941
craigg@ci.austin.mn.us
www.ci.austin.mn.us

March 22, 2021

Senator Julie Rosen, Chair
Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
State Office Building, Room 55
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Rosen and Members of the Commission,

It has come to our attention that you plan on hearing **SF 609 (Goggin) and HF 419 (Drazkowski)** at your meeting tomorrow. This legislation would modify the formula for state supplemental fire aid paid to relief association's and the PERA Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Plan.

While we appreciate many smaller departments struggle with funding their pension plans, this modification would significantly and negatively impact the City of Austin current allocation. We have taken proactive steps to keep our volunteer firefighter pensions fair, having the state shortchange our and many other departments across the state would not be the proper message to send across the state that we value ALL of those who make a commitment to their communities no matter their size.

Basing the supplemental aid on the same formula as is done with fire state aid on population and estimated market value best recognizes the reality of communities which vary considerably across the state. Utilizing the current state aid formula of a community's population and market value provides a simple methodology which naturally translates to the number of fire calls which typically transpire and thereby the demands of the position.

I think you all appreciate recruiting volunteer firefighters is a challenge across the state and now is not the time to pit one community against another. If there is a recognition that smaller departments need additional help, we'd encourage you to look at some other method to add resources to address these needs. Targeting one community's funding for reallocation does not build a positive environment across the state. We'd ask that you look for an alternate way to achieve the legislation's goal and in its current form would ask you to oppose the adoption of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Craig" being more prominent than the last name "Clark".

Craig Clark, Administrator