

**From:** [Julie Martzke](#)  
**To:** [Lisa Diesslin](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Educator Pension Reform  
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I am a school psychologist in District 196, currently in my 26th year of working in education, 23 of those years in Minnesota. I was 22 when I started my career in Wisconsin and moved to Minnesota after three years. At that time, I had no idea that I was going to be giving away a huge proportion of my retirement benefits by moving to Minnesota rather than staying in Wisconsin. While I have loved the life I have built in Minnesota, I am devastated to realize that in Wisconsin I could have retired at age 57 with full benefits, while in MN I would only receive 43% of my full pension if I worked the same number of years. This is disgraceful.

In addition to my full time career in the public schools, I taught at Hamline University for 15 years as an adjunct professor in their Masters of Arts in Teaching program. During the last several years it was getting difficult to encourage young people to go into education, given the decreasing respect, support, and the unfathomable stress that the pandemic and post-pandemic teaching have added to an already difficult job. I am passionate about public education and I want our children in Minnesota to have the best of the best. However, knowing what I know now, I not only discourage young people from entering education, but counsel them to choose jobs in Iowa, Wisconsin, or North Dakota over Minnesota. It's simply the wise decision to make; one that I wish I had made myself.

We also need to consider how retirement ages impact our current system. Many of the best substitutes are retired teachers. In my 26 years in education, I have never experienced a substitute shortage like we have currently. It is crushing staff who are constantly filling in for colleagues, using their prep time to do so. If current teachers were able to retire a few years earlier, many more would be willing to work as substitutes. They are simply not doing so when they retire at 66 or later. We need them desperately.

Lastly, this is the first time in 26 years that I have seriously considered leaving education. Many of my colleagues feel similarly. The stress of two years of pandemic teaching, the constant negativity from community members, and shortages that have made workloads unreasonable have all contributed. Knowing that there is a possibility of earlier retirement may retain many of our highly skilled mid-career educators.

Please support the TRA proposal for equitable pension reform for Tier II educators. It is essential to keep Minnesota a quality education state and retain educators for decades to come.

Sincerely,  
Julie Martzke  
Nationally Certified School Psychologist  
5812 Elliot Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55417