

From: [Michael Pothast](#)
To: [Lisa Diesslin](#)
Subject: Written testimony 2/3/23 meeting
Date: Sunday, April 2, 2023 11:54:22 AM

Hello,

I normally don't write these types of emails, where it is a much more "selfish" or personal reason to reach out. However, at this point, I have decided to send a note.

I am hoping and assuming that you have received other emails regarding a push to revisit the current retirement plan offered by **TRA** for teachers. There have been two proposals brought up: (1) Retire at age 60 AND 30 years experience (2) Retire at age 62 OR 35 years of experience.

I (and this the selfish part in many ways) would benefit greatly from either of those. I started teaching in 1995/96 when I was 21 and turned 22 a few weeks into my first year. With either of those options, the "light" at the end of the tunnel is very achievable and near. Without those, to get full benefits, I would have to teach until I am 66. That would mean 45 years of teaching. I enjoy my job. I am able to roll with much of what has changed in the past 27 years and continue to enjoy the challenge that is teaching. However, the idea of bringing the energy and passion that this job requires for another 17 years is hard to imagine. I don't know how anyone, realistically, can say that they would have the energy and needed passion to teach for 45 years and until the age of 66. And, I REALLY don't want to do a disservice to my students and the profession I have given over half of my life to by being that "old, burnt out" teacher. But, I feel like the system of teaching unit age 66 is setting up so many teachers to be just that.

In the bigger picture, I worry about where the profession of teaching might be heading. You can easily find facts on the troubling trends on enrollment in education programs at colleges dropping, schools having a hard time finding teachers, and teachers leaving the profession. All ideas to KEEP teachers in the career and to also pursue it need to be an option. I went into teaching with eyes wide open, knowing that I wouldn't make as much as my brothers in the business world. I knew that and I accepted that. With that, though, it has been a challenge to put as much towards retirement, etc... when having a family and life's expenses. I am pretty dependent on my pension, so leaving at 62 and taking a penalty is an issue. Many younger teachers are seeing this and hearing us "old timers" talk about teaching until 66 or being penalized for leaving at the age of 62 and it is affecting them. That isn't hyperbole. Part of my current role is to work with young, new teachers and this is a topic they are asking about and it is a possible factor for them leaving the profession. I don't know how to answer or try to make it seem "right"

when they are shocked at the age 66 for a retirement age or having 14% of my pension penalized for leaving at 62. It is a tough sell.

If/when you see any ideas about the current debate about the TRApension come your way, I just ask that you approach with the idea in mind that it isn't a bunch of teachers being greedy or just wanting to "get out early". That is an insulting and frustrating comment I have heard some make. It is teachers seeing that we simply can't bring the needed energy and passion to our students when age 66 or, in my case, 45 years in. It just isn't truly reasonable. We also see people leaving the profession for better options, and we worry about what our schools will look like in the future.

Thanks for listening and I appreciate your time taken to read this.

--

Sent from Gmail Mobile

This message is intended for the use of the person or entity to whom it is addressed and may contain information that is privileged and confidential, the disclosure of which is governed by applicable law. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, or the employee or agent responsible for delivering it to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, or copying of this information is prohibited. If you have received this message in error, please notify sender immediately.