

**From:** [Steve Bliven](#)  
**To:** [Lisa Diesslin](#)  
**Subject:** Request to testify, March 22 LCPR meeting Written Testimony  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 3, 2023 7:53:08 AM

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Good Morning LCPR Committee:

This is similar to one of the many emails I have sent. **Thank you for being a servant leader**; your position is to help decide what is the right road to choose for the benefit of those you represent and **Thank you for agreeing to have another look at pension reform today**. I would think in your position on this committee you concur with an educator's mindset. By nature, we serve with our heart and soul by putting others first. This is sometimes a teacher's worst virtue, because they forget to take care of themselves and often trust others to make the right decisions for their well-being. As you have probably heard from many teachers, I am also disheartened that Minnesota ranks as having one of the worst pension plans in the country for Tier II teachers (hired after 1989).

As a student, I had a wonderful education in East Grand Forks. Many of my classmates, an astounding 20%, went into education. We loved our teachers and the nurturing home feeling we experienced; we felt a need to give back to future generations. Almost all these classmates have now retired as they qualified for the Rule of 90; most of them are either subbing or volunteering in the schools. However, a few of us decided to change careers and become teachers soon after the Rule of 90 ended. After prayers and long discussions with my wife, we decided that I could take a 60 percent cut in pay and become a classroom teacher. Despite the drastic reduction of income, I took solace in the fact that teachers do have a nice retirement. I have loved my teaching profession and have an abundant amount of blessings that my cup truly runneth over. I would never want to give back any of my students, families or peers that have made this a wonderful profession. A true gift is to see these young scholars grow in many areas and become confident and happy young people.

**Social Media has changed these rose colored attitudes and I fear that these young people who are thinking about the educational profession will look at other careers instead or decide to teach in other states that offer a decent retirement.** I already hear from student teachers that the "talk" is how Minnesota ranks near the very bottom of the country for retirement age - 7 years longer than the national average. They are aware that Minnesota teachers hired after 1989 are now feeling deceived by thinking they would have an equitable pension. On Facebook, *Pension Reform for Tier II Minnesota Teachers* has been growing to over 17,000 members and continuing. I know you are being bombarded with emails, but please listen to the ideas that many career teachers are giving you. With the current bill you're looking at, please bring the penalties down to the 60 years. **Also, at 62/30 with an NRA of 64, shouldn't the penalty be null as it was already 14% beforehand?** Education Minnesota and the TRA have done research and have made multiple recommendations. My dream is to retire and spend time with my grandchildren,

give back to the schools, continue to be a deacon in my church, and be a light in my community. This is the year to put the past wrongs behind us and give us an equitable pension plan. I would love to feel valued and be able to honestly encourage the best and brightest to become teachers in our wonderful state of Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration,

Steve Bliven - 5th grade teacher - *Former Minnesota Teacher of the Year Finalist*