

From: [Lora Larson](#)
To: [Lisa Diesslin](#)
Subject: Written Testimony for LCPR Committee
Date: Wednesday, February 7, 2024 8:37:40 PM

Hello Chair Her and Members of the LCPR Committee,

My name is Lora Larson. I've been a MN Educator for 29 years. Prior to that, I worked at a nursing home as a CNA for 5 years. In addition, for 20 years of that time, my husband and I milked cows and farmed. My husband passed away 8 years ago, when our son was 11 years old. I will turn 60 in June, and I am tired! I have worked in 2 of the most time consuming and stressful jobs with the physical labor of milking cows every day, feeding calves and youngstock, baling hay, etc, and financial stress of making ends meet. Then teaching for 29 years, giving my students much of my time and energy, bringing work home every night and weekend to correct and plan lessons to do the best job I possibly can do to help my students learn and grow! I have loved all of these jobs, but I am getting old and tired! I am a diabetic, have high blood pressure, psoriasis, and have a lot of arthritis in my joints from working and pushing my body too hard! I have had several cortisone injections in my knees, and am looking at needing knee replacement in the next few years. I am ready to retire!

Now that I feel worn out and ready to retire, I find that the penalties for retiring at my age would reduce my pension by nearly half! This is the pension that I have been forced to contribute to for my entire career in education! These penalties for retiring before age 65/66 are so extreme that I cannot afford to retire, and I will have to find a way to continue working till at least age 62 with 30+ years of teaching service. That is the first slightly reasonable point to retire with only a 10.4% deduction in my pension. But along with that, I will not receive any COLAS until I reach NRA of 65, and if I were to quit working now and wait to start collecting my pension at age 65, I would not receive any augmentation on my invested money over that time period! TRA would take advantage of my inability to work till 65 by keeping the interest from my invested money over those 5 years! How does that make sense? Does that sound fair to you?

The Rule of 90 may have been an excellent pension plan 34 years ago, but today, even that plan is lower than average when compared to other states' teacher pensions. Then, Tier 2 teachers fall considerably lower on the

charts when compared to other states. It is shocking that we have representatives in TRA who are actively holding Tier 2 teachers in this position of paying for the poor choices of the legislature in not funding our pensions as needed, and holding Tier 2 teachers hostage to pay the debts and balance the fund for future teachers. It is also shocking to see members on the LCPR Committee who were leaders in creating the added legislation in 2013 to further increase the unfair burden on Tier 2 teachers with extreme penalties for retirement before NRA. They are in position to continue to enforce this unfair burden, and force us to continue working in a demanding career till age 66/65 to be able to collect our full pension without extreme "discounts," or lose much of our pension if we cannot physically or mentally work that long. They are making money off of us, and we are being used as their plan to balance the fund. They know that most teachers will not be able to teach till age 65/66. We are having our retirement years and pensions stolen from us. This is disgraceful, and it is time to make a change to take care of the teachers who have spent their lives giving so much of themselves to their education careers! I think you all are aware there is a major crisis ahead for public education, and this issue needs to be addressed as soon as possible to avoid further damage to the profession for future generations. It's time to pony up and fix the pension system now, to make Minnesota a state where people are proud to be teachers and valued in the community as we help educate all of our children. The next generation of teachers is watching, as well as mid-career teachers, all of whom will be looking into other career options when they realize how poorly their pension system has become in Minnesota.

Please understand that there are people in leadership positions in TRA, EdMN, and the LCPR who are supposed to represent the interest of teachers, but are not fairly representing Tier 2 teachers, and they are amongst you today. We are not asking for advantages or anything spectacular, we are just asking to be treated fairly, and to give us ALL at least the average pension that we have worked so hard for over our careers. Please address this issue this session, to reduce the extreme penalties and give all Tier 2 teachers a reasonable pension when they feel they should retire from teaching.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter!

Sincerely,
Lora Larson