

Testimony of June Pinkin, President
Hartford Federation of Teachers Retiree Chapter

**SB 1122 – An Act Permitting Payment of Union Dues from Teachers’ Retirement
Payments**

Appropriations Committee
March 24, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is June Pinkin and I am a retired Hartford teacher. As President of the Hartford Federation of Teachers Retiree Chapter, AFT Local 1018-R, I come before this committee to speak in favor of S. B. 1122 – An Act Permitting Payment of Union Dues from Teachers’ Retirement Payments.

The Hartford Federation of Teachers Retiree Chapter is the only organization that deals with issues and problems unique to Hartford’s retired teachers. Our goal is to keep our members informed and connected so that they can make the best choices for themselves and also be of service to others. To accomplish this we need to assess membership dues in order to pay for paper, printing, postage and meeting costs. When retirees forget to pay their dues, we send a gentle reminder. We don’t drop them for non-payment right away, as we want them to receive pertinent information. But we cannot afford to have members “in good standing” (dues paid up) subsidize the delinquent ones indefinitely; it’s fiscally impossible.

We have no paid staff and put in many hours of work to benefit retirees. Collecting dues for us is very time consuming and not all that efficient, as can be proven by the variations in our membership “in good standing” numbers from year to year.

The biggest problem we have with dues collection is that sometimes retirees forget to pay them. At the other end of the spectrum, we have those who forget they already paid dues and send in yet another check; some are paid up to three years in advance. Additional problems we’ve encountered are checks that members forgot to sign or that they didn’t write in the correct amount. These checks have to be sent back with a note and an addressed stamped envelope. If such a check gets by us and is sent on to the bank, it is returned with a \$30 processing fee; our dues are only \$20 per year.

I asked members to share their ideas on the proposed legislation and these are some of the comments they offered:

“As a career member of the AFT, I would like to endorse the idea of an automatic dues deduction. As long as I have the choice to participate or cancel, I see no downside to the plan. As in healthcare, we can do a lot to reduce cost and confusion by simply using

twenty-first century technologies to everyone's advantage. Let's improve the system and pass S.B. 1122." Mike Somma

"I would like to confirm my support of the proposal to have retired teachers pay our Retired Teachers Union Membership Dues through an automatic deduction from our pension. As you well know, since leaving full-time teaching, some of us are as busy as ever- taking care our personal needs and those of our family. Consequently, it is very easy to -unitentionally-fail to support our own organization ...by overlooking this important annual contribution.

We members who do realize the importance of the work that the active members of our Retirees Union are contributing, our dues are, in comparison, a small contribution to every retired teacher's welfare and future. A sensible solution to the unintentional neglect by retirees of their financial responsibility here is to offer the membership automatic dues deduction." Diane Miner Hazel

"I support S.B. 1122. Two years ago I lost my husband to prostate cancer. During his illness I lost sight of paying my membership dues. In hindsight I realize that if deductions from my pension were made automatically, my responsibility would have been fulfilled in a timely manner. Overall, the bill would serve greatly to keep track of membership obligations." Joan Carcia

"I believe that offering retired teachers the opportunity to have union dues deducted from monthly pension deposits is an idea whose time has come. Today the majority of retirees rarely use checks---bills are paid on line---withdrawn from bank accounts.

The Teachers' Retirement Board automatically deposits teachers' checks as do other state agencies. Having union dues deducted simplifies teachers' lives. No longer would we need to remember to send yearly checks. Small monthly deductions are easier on our budgeting and our memories. I feel this opportunity would be a good one." Ester

"I am in favor of the automatic dues deduction for retired educators. It would be convenient for me because I am out of town a lot." Kirkland Fain

"What a great help it would be to retirees if the State agreed to deduct union dues of retired teachers from their State pension checks. As a 75-five-old teacher from Hartford with a 79-year-old retired husband with disabling spinal stenosis, I am somewhat overwhelmed with keeping track of healthcare payments, doctor visits, and all the physical minutiae of daily senior life. Correspondingly, the biggest problem of paying my union dues is simply remembering to pay them.

Our union, the Hartford Federation of Teachers Retirees, successfully coordinates so many helpful benefits and informational sessions for the members that it is vital that its services be maintained. For the State to remove the chore of collecting from the union's responsibility would be most appreciated by hundreds of teachers retired from Connecticut's public school systems." Kathleen Collins.

There is a need and benefit to being connected for retirees and we provide that connection. Please help us provide it to more of them. Thank you for your consideration.