

TESTIMONY TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

March 8, 2012

RE: HB 5016-Section 4

Good morning Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Rita Schor. I live in West Hartford and I am here today to speak as a member of the Retirees Section of the Hartford Federation of Teachers.

I am speaking today to testify against Section 4 of HB 5016. This proposed bill would reduce the State's current contribution to retired teachers Health Fund (HIPA). I am asking the members of the General Assembly to veto this proposal.

As I wrote in an e-mail to my representative, Andrew Fleischmann of the 18th District, who also sits on the Appropriations Committee, for the past 2 years a large number of retired teachers received no COLA in their monthly pension benefit.

However, the deduction for our portion of health insurance was increased in those same years. This means that the net monthly pension benefit received by anyone who retired after 1993 decreased during the past 2 years.

A big factor that induced me to come before you today, were 2 headlines in the Hartford Courant that, ironically, appeared in the past 2 days. They were about increases in pay for 2 Connecticut CEO's. In Tuesday's paper on Page A8 the headline read "Cigna CEO's Pay Jumped 27 Percent to \$12.5 M." In Wednesday's paper on Page A8 under the headline "CEO Gets 16% More..." the article went on to explain that Webster Financial Corp's chief executive received a package in cash and stock valued at \$2.8 M..."

I know; I know. - The CT General Assembly has nothing to do with these astronomical pay packages. But the discrepancy between these stratospheric salaries and the pay teachers received over their entire careers is beyond the pale. After reading about these pay packages on the one hand, and in the same week pondering the possibility of the state decreasing its contribution to the retired teachers Health Fund, I felt it was mandatory for me to come before you and urge you to veto Section 4 of HB 5016.

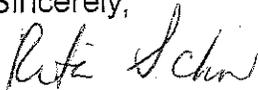
Consider a married couple who are retired teachers. They worked hard, most likely had summer jobs, put a couple of kids through college, paid off their mortgage and-yes-even took some nice vacations. Now they're retired, still paying plenty in property taxes, health insurance fees, rising food and gas prices and helping out their kids and grand kids. Believe me, this couple, in their seventies or eighties, does not have savings that equals one year's salary of the aforementioned CEO's. If, this year, the Governor and the General Assembly decrease the State's contribution to the retired couple's health

insurance premiums, the Governor and Legislature are, in effect, part of the proverbial war on the middle class.

To help make ends meet it was common for many retirees to invest in CD's and use the interest that was once around 5% to supplement their pension benefit. I don't have to tell you what happened to the 5% CD. But I do want to remind you that this is another reason to veto HB5016- Section 4.

It is completely unacceptable for the Governor and the General Assembly to consider a reduction in the state's contribution to the Health Fund of retired teachers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rita Schor".

Rita Schor
110 Montclair Drive
West Hartford

Member HFT-Retirees and ARTC