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Catherine Cerrina <ccerrina@yahoo.com>
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AppropriationTestimony
Reductions by CT to State Teachers Retirement Health Care

To:
Subject:

To Whom It May Concern:

Please be advised that both my husband and I were teachers in the Manchester Public Schools District for a combined service of 65 years. We became teachers when salaries were pitifully low, obtained the necessary post graduate education to continue to teach in the State, worked in the "real world" with additional jobs in order to pay our bills and loans. Because so many teachers were leaving the field as salaries had not kept up with inflation and the salaries in the "real world", the State passed the educational enhancement act to attract good teachers and to keep good teachers already in the field. However, the additional money for salaries fell drastically short of allowing those in the field to play catch-up for the years when the salaries were so low. We were always told that our benefits were better than those of someone working in the real world and were a perk to remaining in the profession.

My husband had to retire on a disability pension because he had a stroke while giving a final exam in June, 1996, and he could not safely return to his position. I continued to teach until 2004 when I elected to retire one year earlier than the required 35 years in order to take care of my husband and my elderly mother. Upon doing so, we realized that we could no longer financially continue to reside in Connecticut, even though we were life long residents and loved the State. We had two mortgages on the home, home heating oil went through the roof price wise, and our property taxes took a big jump as well. We moved south to Florida and we could afford to live without the anxiety and stress of having to cover our bills each month.

Prices here have continued to increase and the cost of living is creeping higher each year. Now, we have been informed that there is a very real situation on the horizon in Connecticut with the Governor's proposal to cut and to stop paying the State's share toward the teachers medical insurance plans, either to the districts or to the state plan. Teachers are once again under the gun and are having to scramble with regard to this issue. For years all of us have labored to educate the coming generations to the best of our abilities. However, that service to the State and to the individual districts does not even receive the lipservice respect for our labors. Instead we are always held suspect, our efforts are regarded by politicians as not being worthy of support in our golden years.

All levels of government are under the pressure of balancing budgets, making cuts, and collecting revenue to do so. All of us have just gone through the Great Recession which is equal to the Great Depression of the late 20s-30s. However, is it right to place some of that burden on the teachers who served willingly at reduced salaries for all those years and are having a difficult time making ends meet without the proposed cuts taking place in the medical benefits. Please keep in mind that many have not paid into Social Security, and for those that did because they were legally required to do so as was their employers, their Social Security benefits have been reduced by the Pension Offset Act during Reagan's administration. The reduced monthly benefit doesn't even cover the cost of Medicare. Added to that, we have gone through 3 years without a COLA because the COLA has been tied to the Federal Government's COLA for some teachers. With a COLA in place now, it has

not kept up with the increases in gas, food, medical care, and utilities that we are currently paying here in Florida.

When voting on appropriations in the upcoming session please be mindful of the teachers that have served and those in service currently. Please also be mindful that they are registered voters in the State and they do follow the politics and legislation that govern them.

Thank you for the time it took to read this email.

Adrian Groot, III
Catherine M. Cerrina