

Testimony of
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Before the Appropriations Committee Sub-Committee on Elementary and Secondary
Education

My name is Mary-Beth Lang. I am a retired teacher. I taught elementary students in the Bridgeport Public Schools for 41 years and retired in 2011.

I'm here today to ask that you to consider Governor Lamont's budget carefully. He is asking to decrease the State's contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Board's health insurance program from 1/3 to 1/4. I urge you to strongly oppose this change.

Currently, active teachers contribute 1/3, retired teachers contribute 1/3, and the State is supposed to contribute 1/3. While the active and retired teachers have always made their full contribution, unfortunately the State has not. Additionally, this year because of the Inflation Reduction Act, the Medicare Advantage plan offered by the TRB went from \$36 in 2024 to \$94 a month which constitutes a 38% rise in costs. At the same time, the COLA for the pension rose only 2.5%. Reducing the State's contribution would result in a greater burden shared by retired teachers and could result in even more costs being shifted to active teachers.

In addition, in 2018 member contributions increased from 6% to 7%. And while State employees receive a 100% tax break on their pensions, teachers receive only 50%. At a time when schools are facing teacher shortages, proposals like this send the wrong message.

There are currently more than 500 open teaching positions in the State of Connecticut which reduces the contributions to the TRB pension and health insurance accounts. If this body is truly interested in recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, it needs to commit to preserving and fully funding the State's 1/3 contribution to the TRB health insurance program.