

Reply Letters for local State Legislators Opposing House Bill 59 Healthcare reform

On Tuesday, October 29, 2013 12:12 PM, "Provost, Denise - Rep. (HOU)"

<Denise.Provost@mahouse.gov> wrote:

Dear Barbara and Louis,

I agree that it is unfair of Governor Patrick to change the rules for government employees who have relied on a decent benefits package as part of the compensation for their work. H. 59 represents the kind of ruthless cost-cutting that one expects to see in the least worker-friendly parts of the private sector, not in our state government.

I believe that MA must reject the kind of right wing "reforms" embraced by states like Wisconsin, which look to demonize public employees, and realize budget savings at their expense. I will not support any version of this bill that penalizes current state workers or retirees. Governor Patrick's effort, even if partly successful, will only make it harder for the Commonwealth to attract and retain good employees.

I urge you to contact Representative Aaron Michlewitz or Senator William Brownsberger, Chairmen of the Joint Committee on Public Service, to testify in opposition to this bill, which is having its public hearing on October 31, 2013 at 11:00AM at Gardner Auditorium.

Thanks for writing and for your advocacy.

Very Truly Yours,

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From Senator Pat Jehlen

Dear Neighbor,

Thank you for writing in regards to H.59, An act relative to providing retiree healthcare benefits reform.

I agree that this legislation, as written, would disproportionately impact retirees. Massachusetts has the biggest gap between median income and necessary expenses for single elderly renters in the nation. That gap is growing, and it's worse for women. While our current retirement system is unsustainable as currently structured, we must be exceptionally careful not to restructure it in a way that will jeopardize the economic security of Massachusetts retirees. The Commission on Elder Economic Security, which I co-chair, believes that we will need to look for ways to increase income and assets, but also to reduce costs. The commission worked hard to find solutions to the reality of people living longer.

The common idea that public sector workers have better benefits and pay, and therefore it's only fair to cut their benefits, is not accurate. Two recent reports, by [MassBudget](#) and [Thomas Kochan](#) of MIT's Sloan School of Management find that if education and experience – as well as pay and benefits – are considered, public workers with at least a college education make less than their private counterparts.

Last week [I testified](#) before the committee about this legislation, asking that they proceed with extreme caution, so as to not unfairly impact future retirees. In my testimony I voiced another concern with the bill: requiring 20 years of full-time work to vest, and 30 years to receive full benefits, will have a disproportionate negative effect on women workers as they age. Women are more likely to work part-time, to have interrupted careers due to care-giving, and to enter state service late. They are already far less likely to vest at 10 years in the pension system and twice as likely to be poor in old age as men.

I will continue to monitor the progress of this legislation and advocate for changes that will protect current workers while also stabilizing the long-term financial solvency of the Massachusetts retirement system.

I want to thank you again for taking the time to write to me. Please feel free to contact me with comments or concerns about this or any other issues in the future. If you do not already receive my occasional email newsletter and would like to, you can subscribe at www.patjehlen.org;

Sincerely,

Senator Pat Jehlen