



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 31st, 2019

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I write to submit an explanation for my vote on Senate Bill 1049.

Funding schools is a priority for me. As a high school teacher, and mother of students in our public schools, nothing has motivated me more than the idea that it is time to stabilize and increase school funding. I see my vote on 1049 as a continuation of my support for schools. Without the passage of this imperfect bill, the Student Success Act dollars we have just created are at high risk of going straight to impending PERS rate increases, and not into classrooms.

My vote is a reflection of my belief that the "yes" vote on the bill before me was essential to the stability of the entire PERS system right now. A "no" vote, would risk inaction this session, and would have opened up PERS benefits to corporate efforts to make even deeper cuts to employee benefits. That is simply not a risk I was willing to take.

Individuals and organizations are making very real threats to put PERS reform on the ballot. One threatened ballot measure would create yet another retirement tier, denying future employees access to a stable pension, and instead create a system where their retirement comes entirely in the form of a "defined-contribution" or 401K-style program. Such a ballot measure would have a good chance of passing and thus, legislative inaction could have disastrous impacts on PERS.

Public employees work hard every day to support and strengthen our communities. They dedicate their lives to serving the greater good and they deserve to be supported. It is painful to know that my only two options on this bill in the end would potentially change the PERS benefits for these dedicated workers, caregivers, first responders, and teachers.

Thanks to the advocacy of public employees, this proposal was made stronger, eliminating cuts to the Money-Match and ensuring there are both one-time and ongoing resources dedicated to paying down the unfunded liability.

When I first arrived in the Legislature, a colleague said to me "there are no new ideas, only an idea's time." That said, the pros and cons of many of the ideas in this bill have been considered for a long time and many have been suggested in prior sessions. This is a culmination of years of efforts to "solve" PERS.

I cannot underscore enough that this was a difficult vote for me. I have seriously considered the ramifications of both a yes and a no vote. The dissonance I feel is real. Whether you agree with



my vote, or are upset with it, please know that I have listened, learned, and deliberated. Along with many of you, I have searched for a better option.

I am a Tier 2 PERS teacher, voting to cut my own benefits because it means tens of millions of dollars in savings for all of the school districts in the area I represent. I believe 1049 will provide cost savings that help us avoid extensive layoffs and that protect current critical services, while stabilizing our essential retirement system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Courtney Neron". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Rep. Courtney Neron