

Suspend the Limitation on Earnings in Retirement when Receiving a Pension

The Council supports extending the ability of public employees to earn greater than \$35,000 in retirement without diminishing their pension while working in a public school. Retirees have this ability only through June 30, 2024 unless extended. This provision has been in place either via executive order or statute nearly continuously since March of 2020.

Schools have been struggling with hiring shortages in multiple fields for several years. The Council has advocated for years to increase the limitation on earning in retirement. In 2019, the limit was increased by \$5,000. While that change was helpful, the impact for the teaching staff was felt mostly around the edges with and helped more with substitute teaching availability than filling long term vacancies, as teachers begin their careers at salaries higher than that amount.

From the inception of the pandemic to present and for at least the next several years, schools across the state will face a hiring shortage. Some schools struggle to employ educators in only difficult to staff subjects such as English as a new language or special education, while other schools experience hiring difficulties for almost all openings. Most schools have encountered immense challenges with employing bus drivers, school resource officers, and substitute teachers.

Whether a school's hiring shortage challenge is significant or intermittent, this proposal will provide some relief. It offers a significant financial incentive to current and future pensioners to return to the classroom or school district. It is a tool that schools can immediately employ to fill vacancies with qualified and experienced employees.

It is important to note this law also addresses a critical security need for schools. Many schools prefer to hire retired police officers as school resource officers rather than contracted security guards. Hiring former police officers directly rather than working with security guard contracting firms helps ensure that the school resource officer will meet the needs of the school and students. However, hiring retired police officers will not be possible, absent a waiver, unless this law is extended.

More must be done to address staffing shortages. In the interim, this proposal provides some relief and the ability for schools to hire highly qualified staff, security, and teachers.

The Council supports extending provisions authorizing public employee retirees to work in schools without a reduction in their pension