

Chris O'Brien

From: Kerri Sloat <premawellness87@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 22, 2025 10:54 AM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Correction to previous testimony H 5198 & 6238

Mr O'Brien, My previous submission was incorrect with Bill H 6238. I want to ensure that my testimony is accurate and presented to the House Finance Committee.

My name is Kerri Sloat and I am a teacher in the Bristol Warren Regional School District. I testify to this Committee that holds a crucial role in shaping the future of our state's public education system and the lives of those who dedicate themselves to teaching. Your decisions determine whether we can sustain a meaningful career, provide for our families, and retire with dignity. This committee's leadership and commitment are vital in addressing the injustices wrought by misguided reforms and ensuring that the promises made to teachers are honored.

I have dedicated over 30 years to teaching in my district. Over those years, I have witnessed significant changes—many of which have eroded the stability and security that once defined a teaching career. To put this into perspective, here is a comparison between what I was led to believe my career would offer when I was hired and the current reality:

- Health Care for Life (ended in 1997)
- Social Security (I received it for 3 years under the Warren Contract; it was later stripped away under regionalization. Bristol Warren does not contribute to Social Security.)
- Fully funded health coverage (now, I pay a \$4,000 deductible annually and monthly premiums)
- Health coverage until age 65 after retirement (now, I will have no health coverage until Medicare begins at age 65)
- Retirement in 28 years (I can now retire after 36 years, totaling 98 in age and years of service)
- Ability to collect 80% of my pension (I will retire under a hybrid plan with only 45% of my salary from pension and additional contributions from TIAA)
- A Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) (current status remains uncertain)

With pension reform and every new contract, I have lost ground. I have gained nothing in over three decades of service. A recent conversation with a retiree from 2003 confirmed her pension is \$46,000 annually—more than what teachers retiring today can expect. This disparity highlights the profound injustice inflicted upon our educators, especially as retirees struggle to secure COLAs amid ongoing cost-of-living increases.

This is not merely about numbers; it is about dignity, respect, and honoring the commitments made to those who dedicate their lives to educating our children. The House Finance Committee's support is essential in rectifying these injustices. We need your leadership to restore what was initially promised and to ensure that teachers are valued and protected.

I urge you to recognize the importance of this issue and to act decisively in support of House Bills 6238 and 5198. The future of our educators—and the quality of education in our state—depends on it.

Sincerely,
Kerri Sloat