



**NV LEGISLATURE'S IFC COMMITTEE'S SUBCOMMITTEE TO ADVISE ON THE EXPENDITURE OF FEDERAL
COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDING, MEETING DECEMBER 2, 2021**

Public Comment from Terri Laird, Executive Director for RPEN, the Retired Public Employees of Nevada

Hello Chair Brooks and fellow Committee Members. I am submitting my public comment in written form as I have a conflict with the Public Employees' Benefits Program (PEBP) meeting taking place the same time as your meeting and unfortunately can't be in two places at the same time!

My name for the record is Terri Laird, spelled TERRI LAIRD, and I am the Executive Director at RPEN, the Retired Public Employees of Nevada. RPEN was formed in 1976 and we currently have close to 8-thousand dues paying members. The bulk of our membership are retired public employees although we do have nearly one thousand active members who are still working.

We have testified at previous IFC meetings as it relates to federal funding Nevada has received, stemming from the COVID pandemic. RPEN, in conjunction with several other public employee advocacy groups, has expressed hope that some of the nearly \$3 Billion Nevada received could be used to help PEBP recover some of the \$25 Million that was taken from the agency earlier this year as Governor Sisolak cut all state agency budgets as the Nevada State Legislature dealt with the huge budget shortfall created by the pandemic.

PEBP and their thousands of participants have had to deal with escalating healthcare costs through increased premiums and deductibles for years that this year also included the elimination of long term disability and other cuts ordered by the Governor. RPEN and our advocacy groups would like to see that funding returned to PEBP through the COVID federal rescue funding you'll be considering today. We learned this week from PEBP Executive Officer Laura Rich that the Governor informed her PEBP will NOT be receiving any of those federal dollars and we find that unconscionable, especially as the PEBP Board has been asked to consider during their meeting today a surcharge on unvaccinated PEBP participants and their dependents who are over the age of 18. It's as if PEBP has to come up with their own CARE funds to deal with this issue they face through no fault of their own. Executive Officer Rich said suppressed COVID claims YTD have reached around \$18 Million and they need to find money to cover those costs and are looking at the surcharges to do that. As a non-partisan organization, we won't take a position on the need for surcharges, only that there might be other options.

We would appreciate more consideration be given for PEBP, the agency responsible for providing health insurance for ALL State employees, that also includes a few pre-Medicare and Medicare Retirees not eligible for the state's Medicare Exchange. The PEBP Board also voted in September to seek ARP funding for PEBP that would allow a return to pre-Pandemic level benefits for participants, benefits they earn and deserve.

We appreciate this Committee's hard work as you appropriate these valuable resources, and thank you in advance for looking out for the hardworking state employees in this great state of Nevada.

Terri Laird, RPEN Executive Director, terri@rpen.org