



January 16, 2024

Good-Morning, and Happy New Year, Chair Dondero-Loop, Vice-Chair Monroe-Moreno and fellow IRBC Committee Members:

My name for the record is Terri Laird, and I am the Executive Director of RPEN, the Retired Public Employees of Nevada, where we represent nearly 75-hundred retired and active public employees. We are a non-profit, non-partisan membership-based group that has been around since 1976. We are also part of a public employee coalition that supports legislative activity geared to protect the Nevada Public Employees' Retirement System and Public Employees' Benefits Program that you will hear all about today.

We have always fought against efforts to "reform" NV PERS and change it to a Defined Contribution/401K plan for new hires, leaving PERS with two plans in place which would be costly and could weaken the Defined Benefit plan in place now if it were ever approved. Going into the next legislative session, such a concept could resurface and RPEN would be adamantly against any such effort.

On the topic of PERS, we are still concerned with escalating Contribution Rates necessary because while hiring may be stronger due to legislative action taken last year, some jobs may still be vacant, which could cause a "Catch-22" effect because of retiree healthcare benefits that were eliminated for state employees hired after the 2011 Legislative Session. We hope this critical issue can one-day be reconsidered...especially as healthcare costs continue to escalate for those WITH health insurance, let alone the impact it has on those WITHOUT health insurance.

And on the subject of rising costs, retirees in the Medicare Exchange haven't had a raise in their Health Reimbursement Accounts for years...and an effort at the 2023 session to address this concern went nowhere. So, RPEN along with our advocacy groups, hope to see this addressed in 2025 and will raise the H-R-A contribution from \$13.00 per month, per years of service to at least \$15.00 or perhaps more per month. Additionally, we also support resurrecting Long-Term Disability at PEBP as well a general return to pre-COVID levels of funding for PEBP participants.

In closing, we thank this Committee and the leaders at PERS and PEBP for your efforts to represent all public employees and protect the valuable healthcare and pension benefits they work so hard to receive.

Thank you.

Terri Laird, Executive Director