



12/17/24 IRBC Public Comment

Terri Laird, RPEN Executive Director

Good Morning Chair Dondero-Loop, Vice-Chair Monroe-Moreno and fellow committee members. My name for the record is Terri Laird, and I am the Exec. Director at RPEN, the Retired Public Employees of Nevada. We are a non-profit, non-partisan federally tax-exempt organization created in 1976-77 and we have nearly 7-thousand dues paying members throughout the state in 17 chapters.

Our primary purpose these last nearly 50 years is to protect the pension earned by all of our members while working as well as lobbying to make their health care affordable. We are grateful that the 2023 legislature was able to increase wages earned by state employees who have always been paid less than their city and county government counterparts. We also are aware that the Nevada State Police loses troopers regularly who hire in and are trained at the state level only to leave soon after for city and county law enforcement agencies who pay a lot more.

Additionally we know that PERS has to adjust contribution rates paid by state employers and employees prior to every legislative session. In recent years those contribution rates have risen rapidly, especially for entry level state employees who are also paying higher premiums for health insurance, leaving little for them to live on. In addition, any state employee hired after 2011 will never receive retiree health care benefits because of cuts the legislature had to make that year. So it's no wonder hiring is suffering in many state agencies like the DMV, DETR and even at PEBP. This is a great concern for us as we head into another legislative session. We are here today to acknowledge our continuous support for Nevada's PERS and PEBP agencies, and hope lawmakers will again see fit to do what's necessary to hire more workers, pay them more and in the end, lower those contribution rates. Today's state employees are working to support our current retirees and we are thankful for them, and also want them to be able to have a livable wage, and affordable health care while working, as well as when they retire.

Thank you.