

Mister Chair, Members of the Committee, my name is Carol Pace. I am a volunteer with AARP Colorado.

AARP supports HB 22-1101, Public Employees' Retirement Association Service Employment in Rural Schools

Education is at a crisis level in staff shortages in rural and critical shortage areas. The harm to students, families and communities is real and quantifiable when school staff shortages result in curtailment of education.

PERA retirees may be willing and able to fill vacancies in the Rural School District Critical Shortage Program, which HB22-1101 expands and makes permanent.

PERA reports that retired teachers were compensated 14.3% less than comparable jobs in the private sector, contributed 8% of their wages to PERA and receive an average payout of \$35,268. Teachers and other school employees may be motivated to seek additional financial security by working after retirement and may be interested in job vacancies.

AARP supports older Coloradans securing employment, utilizing their highest skill levels, education and experience, and having greater financial security in their retirement. AARP supports removing barriers and expanding employment opportunities for all who are willing and able to work, seeking to minimize older adult unemployment or underemployment.

AARP is opposed to older adults facing deteriorating job opportunities and job quality, stagnating wage levels, a decline in jobs with benefits and contingent employment work.

PERA carries out policies established by the legislature. The legislature has the opportunity with this bill to relieve staff shortages with PERA retirees.

1. School staff workforce shortages have impacts.
 - a. Reduction in education time, 4-day school weeks, increased remote learning, increased class sizes.
 - b. A recently interviewed educator related he knew one school that hadn't had a math teacher in 5 years.
 - c. The stats pile up: the state ranks 41st in pupil teacher ratio; only 39% of Colorado 3rd graders scored at a proficient literacy rate in 2021.
2. Communities would be well-served to have experienced staff in shortage areas.

PERA retirees remain an underutilized resource and could be a significant asset in the critical educator shortage areas of the state.

We ask the committee to support HB22-1101.

Respectfully,

Carol Pace, AARP Volunteer Advocate

Mister Chair, Members of the Committee, my name is Carol Pace. I am a volunteer with AARP Colorado. AARP has over 670,000 members in Colorado and is focused on Coloradans age 50 and above, as well as their families.

AARP supports HB 22-1057, Public Employees' Retirement Association Employment After Teacher Retirement

Education is at a crisis level in teacher shortage areas. PERA retirees may be willing and able to fill teacher vacancies.

However, PERA teacher retirees are subject to restrictive stipulations if they work annually beyond a limited number of days. My understanding is that their earned pensions are actually reduced 5% per monthⁱ for each extra day worked for that needy school district. Their health insurance benefit is effectively withdrawnⁱⁱ, which is alarming because many of these retirees are not eligible for Medicare as they contributed to PERA and not to Social Security/Medicare.

With any post retirement work, they are again assessed 10.5% of their teacher paycheck by PERA, a tax which is rising. Yet there is no additional accrued benefit, no credit given for additional months of service. It is in essence a double taxation for no return. And as these positions are not eligible for contributions to Social Security, they cannot access the safety net benefits of that system either.

Colorado retired teachers are an asset to the state, and we are indebted to them for providing for our children and grandchildren. We are grateful to them for the knowledge, skills, experience and dedication that they could continue to provide in the classroom.

PERA carries out policies established by the legislature, and the legislature has the opportunity with HB22-1057 to assist with the teacher shortage crisis.

1. Colorado teacher workforce shortages have impacts:
 - a. School districts with 4-day weeks, the most in the nation; combining classes, even doubling class sizes.
 - b. Schools making plans to close for the day- the “no teacher” day, not the “snow day.”
 - c. Students missing education, but also meals, as school meal programs are often vital.
 - d. Overworked current teachers suffering burnout and throwing in the towel.

PERA retirees are an untapped resource and would be beneficial for teacher shortages.

We ask that the committee support HB 22-1057.

Respectfully,

Carol Pace, AARP Volunteer Advocate

ⁱ Working After Retirement, Colorado PERA, p. 6, rev 2021.

ⁱⁱ Colorado PERA Law, Colorado PERA, p.138 (e), rev 2021.