



**Rep. Adam Miller Sponsor Testimony regarding HB 499 - Enable Disability Pension
Recipients to Serve In Local Government (As Prepared)**

**Before the House Insurance Committee
Feb. 16, 2022**

Thank you Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chair Lampton, Ranking Member Miranda and members of this committee for allow me to testify on behalf of HB 499.

Under Ohio law, an Ohio Public Employee Retirement System (OPERS) disability pension recipient cannot hold elected office, no matter how small and local; and regardless of pay, without jeopardizing their entire disability pension.

That is because these small, local positions are also part of the OPERS system.

According to Ohio law, a school board member may be compensated up to \$125 per meeting. If a board meets weekly – and they rarely do; the board member could receive about \$6500 a year. That number is usually much smaller.

If an OPERS disability pension recipient wanted to serve their community on a local school board, they would have to forfeit their entire pension – which could be 10 times, 12 times, 15 times, that much because of the board compensation; no matter how small.

This just does not seem right – nor fair.

We are encouraging disability pension recipients to do nothing. We need their input, their expertise, and service to our communities.

A position on a local school board, or local ESC, or a township board of trustees, or the governing body of a village is the essence of community service and often the compensation does not even cover the cost of serving.

These are not get rich schemes.

This is not about serving on full time or highly compensated positions.

This is about someone who served their state, and now are on disability pension, so they cannot be a police officer anymore or a park ranger, or an accountant that requires long hours sitting down. That does not mean they can't be a valuable member of a local school board.

Apart from 2021 - which was an outlier for school board candidates - we continue to struggle as a state getting people to run for local office. And a policy like this, exacerbates that problem.

OPERS disability pension recipients have a lot to offer, despite their inability to perform their previous job. We should tap that expertise and those experiences to improve our state.

Thank you for your time and I'd be happy to answer any questions.