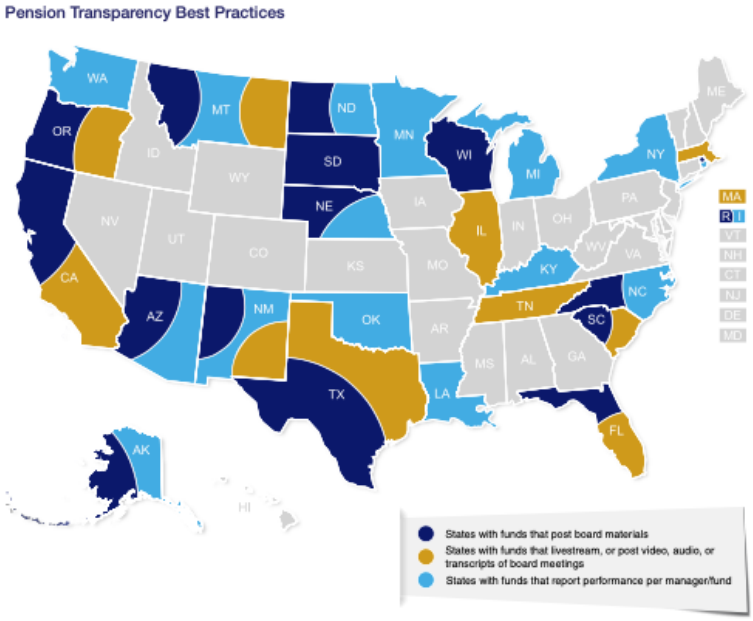
State Representatives Haraz Ghanbari and Brigid Kelly

Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chairman Lampton, Ranking Member Miranda, and members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 539.

This legislation will increase the transparency of public retirement system boards. This bill provides that public retirement boards (Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS), Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund, State Teachers Retirement Board (STRS), School Employees Retirement Board (SERS), and State Highway Patrol Retirement Board) must publicly broadcast non-executive meetings and archive the recording on their website. (The legislation does not include any meetings where private medical information or the degree of disability of a member is discussed.)

We should continue to find more commonsense ways for Ohioans to see and be part of the decision-making processes that impact them and their families every day. But, non-executive meetings of pension boards, while open to the public, are not easily accessible to participants or taxpayers. The Ohio House and Ohio Senate have taken action to ensure that citizens and groups may more easily see what is happening in their State Government through the broadcast of all Committee meetings; just as we have – and should – work to increase transparency and accountability for House and Senate Committees, so should we for Pension Boards conducting work on behalf of participants and taxpayers. In fact, the Ohio Channel could broadcast, and archive, the pension meetings should they be conducted in the Statehouse – and it does not charge for this coverage.

Especially over the last few years, organizations have proven they can innovate. Many organizations have proven that the important business they are tasked with could be done virtually or their proceedings made available to the impacted parties. While some of the funds have begun to stream their meetings (using various formats) or utilize other conferencing services, the funds need to offer access more uniformly to the important proceedings of their board meetings. And we want to make sure it continues in perpetuity.



The map at right is from a Pennsylvania Treasurer's report[1] from October 2019, which summarizes the Public Pension Management and Investment Review Commission (PPMAIRC) work in Act 5 of 2017 (established by the PA General Assembly). The states shaded in beige Livestream, post video, audio, or transcripts of board meetings.

We ask your support for the folks who spend their careers in service to our state - teachers and school employees, law enforcement officers, and other public servants – who have earned these retirement benefits. We are happy to answer any questions you might have.

[1] https://www.patreasury.gov/pdf/2018-PPMAIRC-FINAL.pdf)

Printed in house.