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The Service Employees
International Union
District 1199 WV/KY/OH
Change to Win, CLC
www.seiu1199.org

June 14, 2017

Dear Chairman Arndt, Ranking Member Howse, and Members of the House Aging and Long Term Care Committee:

As one of Ohio's Unions proudly representing employees in school districts and public universities, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 1199 is deeply concerned about provisions included in House Bill 242 to change cost-of-living adjustments for both current and future retirees in the School Employee Retirement System (SERS).

Members in the SERS pension fund are the lowest-paid of the five public pensions, averaging about \$24,000 per year. SEIU 1199 SERS members average closer to \$20,000 per year; many working part time, sometimes only two to four hours per day. They are secretaries, bookkeepers, cooks, lunchroom attendants and cleaners. These support staff are the first people to see their jobs cut or their hours reduced when budget cuts come around even though they perform important work to keep our children fed and safe, and ensure the school is running efficiently.

We understand recent economic downturns have taken a toll on the solvency of the SERS fund and something must be done to boost the health of the fund and protect healthcare coverage. However, the cost-of-living adjustment is a vital element of our members' pension and fundamentally contributes to our members' ability to pay for essentials like rent, food and their electric bill. Considering our retired members receive around \$1,000 per month in their pension checks, they depend on yearly cost-of-living adjustment to keep up with rising costs for basic needs; especially our members who have been retired for ten or more years. A cost-of-living adjustment freeze for retirees authorized by the SERS Board could mean having to choose between food on the table, refilling a prescription or keeping the lights on for our retirees.

Members in SERS worked long hours and contributed a lifetime of loyal service to our school systems. They've earned their pension and peace of mind for their future. For these reasons, SEIU District 1199 opposes HB 242 and urges the committee to ask SERS to consider alternative solutions to promote the health of the pension fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Becky Williams".

Becky Williams, President

