



**Public Employee Retirees, Inc. (PERI)**

Ohio House Pensions Committee

Proponent Testimony – HCR 6

May 9, 2023

Chairman Young, Vice Chairwoman King, Ranking Member Lightbody, and distinguished members of the Ohio House Pensions Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on behalf of the Public Employee Retirees, Inc. in support of HCR 6, urging Congress to repeal the Federal Windfall Elimination Provision within the broader Social Security system.

My name is Richard Ross. I earned my OPERS pension by being the Morgan County Law Librarian, Stockport Solicitor, Morgan County Prosecuting Attorney, and Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney of Athens County. I was a special prosecutor in 13 counties. I have been an attorney for 46 years and was a prosecuting attorney for 26 years. I now serve as the Chairman of the PERI Board of Trustees. I'm pleased to also introduce you to our Executive Director, Lezlie Garcia, who has joined me for today's committee meeting. At its core, PERI's mission is to protect and preserve Ohio Public Employee Retiree pension and benefits programs and advocate for changes that are in the best interest of the organization's over 40,000 Ohio public employee retiree members.

As you've heard from the Resolution's sponsors, Representatives Plummer and King, repealing the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) will provide meaningful relief to current retirees and public employees while treating all workers fairly. Ohio is one of twenty-six states whose public retirees are affected by this unfair law. The WEP was initially designed to ensure that individuals who received a pension from a government job that did not pay into Social Security would not receive a higher Social Security benefit as a result.

Since its inception, the WEP has unfairly reduced the Social Security benefits of countless Ohio public employee retirees. This has created financial strain for many retired public employees who are already struggling to make ends meet and who have dedicated their lives to serving their communities and often rely heavily on their pensions for financial stability in retirement. Depending on their years of service and other factors, their Social Security benefits could be reduced by up to 50% due to WEP.

Fortunately, federal legislation is currently being proposed to repeal the WEP – H.R. 82/S. 597 – also known as the Social Security Fairness Act of 2023. As of May 5, 2023, just a few short months since the commencement of the 118<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress, H.R. 82 has 250 bipartisan congressional co-sponsors, and that number continues to grow. This is a crucial step in ensuring that Ohio public employee retirees receive the Social Security benefits they have earned and deserve. However well-intended the law was when it was developed, it's evident over the last 40 years that its implementation has not resulted in its desired effects.

PERI is grateful for Representative Plummer's and Vice Chairwoman King's sponsorship of this resolution, and we thank you and the committee members for considering HCR 6. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Ross, Chairman of the Board  
Public Employee Retirees, Inc.

Lezlie Garcia, Executive Director  
Public Employee Retirees, Inc.