

From: Tom Young
Date: February 7, 2021 at 11:36:27 AM EST
To: Thomas Stevens
Subject: Health Care

I am reaching out regarding H.81, the technical amendments bill regarding The Commission on Public School Employee Health Benefits. The VSBA is attempting to add "cost containment" language to this bill. This means a huge burden on the teachers. I urge you to reject any amendments which deviate from the primary purpose of the bill, that is, to provide technical amendments to the collective bargaining process based on experiences from the first round of statewide bargaining. H.81 provides technical amendments to the new statewide collective bargaining process and includes a provision that allows, but does not require, the Commission to adopt different premium contributions for teachers and education support staff. This important change to the law allows us to bargain for different premium contributions for education support staff who are among our lowest-paid public school employees. I understand there are likely to be efforts to amend the bill to alter the arbitration provisions of current law. Currently, if the Commission is unable to reach an agreement following mediation, both sides submit their "last best offer" to an arbitrator. Under current law, the arbitrator must consider a variety of factors when choosing which of the two sides' offers to approve, including consideration of ". . . the financial ability of the Education Fund and school districts across the State to pay for the costs of health care benefits and coverage." Given the presence of this language in current law, any amendments to add "cost containment" to the list of things the arbitrator must consider are unnecessary and risk adding confusion to an already complex set of issues the arbitrator must consider. I urge you to reject any such amendments if offered from the floor of the House.

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