

Testimony for House Government Operations
April 6, 2022

My name is Molly Stoner, and I am a 4th grade teacher in the southern part of the state, and I'm in my 30th year of teaching. Thank you so much for having us here today. Inviting teachers and state employees to play an active role in problem solving the pension challenges was a significant commitment on the part of the legislature last year, and I appreciate your continued investment in hearing our voices.

Working collaboratively for seven months was no small feat for the 13 of us that sat around the table (in person!) together. It took some time for us to iron out how we would make decisions and engage together in solving the financial challenges before us, but we did that hard work, and we did it with success. Early on we established the importance of setting agendas collectively, inviting experts from all sides of the issue, and reflecting at each meeting about what we learned and what questions we had from the last meeting. This process was vital to our work - it allowed for:

- all voices to be heard and considered
- multiple perspectives to be respected
- conflicting needs to be assessed
- possible solutions to be floated and debated
- And finally, agreements to be made

Again I will say that the work was far from easy (as I'm sure is the case with just about every decision you make under the golden dome). And yet, in those seven months each member of the task force came to appreciate and have deep respect for the work and contributions of all other members. This is what allowed us to come to agreements that passed 12-0. 12-0 from a task force consisting of House members (Representatives Coplan Hanzas, Gannon and Fagan), Senate members (Senators White and Parent), a representative of the Governor's office (Mike Piecak), state employees (Eric Davis and Leonna Watt), a state trooper (Dan Trottier), and teachers (Kate McCann, Andrew Emrich and myself).

The agreement was made with input from other leaders and professionals, with respect for all positions and with each piece resting in the integrity of the whole. As you consider this bill, I would ask that you remember this piece - that after a very deep dive into the numbers and more than a few rather difficult, contentious discussions, a task force of a dozen unique and engaged voices voted 12-0 for a total package solution (now the bill before you) that is balanced in the **integrity of the whole**.