

Good evening, My name is Alison Sylvester. This is my 22nd year teaching and I currently teach 6th grade math at Riverside Middle School in Springfield. I also serve as the Vermont-NEA Vice President and was a member of our internal pension task force.

First off I want to thank the Act 75 Task Force and legislative leaders for all of their hard work. Their thoughtful and deliberate discussions on how to ensure the fiscal health of the teachers' pension system has resulted in a fair and reasonable package. I especially want to thank Vermont-NEA members Molly Stoner, Kate McCann, and Andrew Emrich for the countless hours they advocated for the teachers across Vermont.

This arrangement calls for both the state and the teachers to shore up our retirement system while ensuring that our pension system is solvent into the future. This commitment from all sides addresses both the legacy underfunding and the structural challenges due to demographic shifts in our teaching population. The state will be adding \$125 million towards the unfunded liability, plus an annual commitment of an additional \$15 million to our pension system. While teachers will be phasing in a progressive contribution structure over three years and delaying our COLA for an additional 12 months. These, along with other changes, will fulfill our obligations overtime, ensuring that the pension

system is healthy and viable for teachers across our state now and into the future.

With the creation of the Vermont Pension Investment Commission and the Legislative Joint Public Pension Oversight Committee we will have teachers and state employees working collaboratively with the legislature to make certain the state, teachers, and state employees never again get to a point where the pension plans are at risk.

## Comment on proposed Pension Task Force agreement

Thank you for considering my input.

1. **A Deal is a Deal-** I believe a deal is a deal, and my acceptance of and continued employment of almost 20 years was based on the pension benefit I was offered at the time. Every year, the State reinforced that deal with a financial statement that I have relied upon as indicative of what my pension benefit is and how much I can expect to receive in retirement, to the penny. That was the deal and it is unfair to have it changed in this fundamental manner.
2. **Employees have not had a real opportunity to review and comment** on the report. Instead it has been presented as a fait accompli. This is unfair.
3. **Employees are not responsible for the performance of the investments in the pension fund.** It is also unfair to make employees essentially insure the poor investment decisions of the State and its investment advisers. I do not believe that the employees should be bearing any of the cost of the mistakes made by the state decisionmakers and investment advisers whose investments were chosen without employee input.
4. **This pension “agreement” VSEA has made comes at a huge cost to employees-** an average 1.5% increase in contributions is significant. That alone would be hard enough. But it gets worse.
5. **Only employees bear the risk of inflation.** The State and apparently the VSEA, have determined that only employees should be bearing the risk of inflation by cutting our COLA by 1% . The State’s contributions are fixed (\$75M up front and \$15M/yr) and immune from the cost of inflation, whereas employees, at a time when inflation is raging at 6%, must assume the risk of inflation over 4%. The annual \$14M from increased employee contributions is also not a fixed amount, but one based on earnings and exposed to the destructive impact of inflation. Between the State and employees, I believe the State is in a better position to assume that risk and I find it offensive that the State is willing to advantage itself over employees on inflation. This is only exacerbated by removing the minimum 1% COLA when inflation is low, like it was until last year.

Toni Clithero

**From:** Lorraine Bramble  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 18, 2022 5:49 PM  
**To:** Testimony <testimony@leg.state.vt.us>  
**Subject:** Pension

Please support the teacher pension as presented by the teacher union committee.

Lorraine Bramble