

Chairperson and members of the committee:

Please oppose closing the NDPERS retirement plan to new hires and do the right thing by keeping the promises made to public employees.

I have been a state employee for almost four years, and a number of those years were as a non-FTE (full-time equivalent) temporary position that did not have access to the defined-benefit plan. I chose to work for the state because I wanted to make a difference in the lives of North Dakotans, but I was only able to justify remaining at the state because of the transition to an FTE position that let me gain the full benefit package. As a one-person household, contributing to the defined-contribution plan was not feasible for me and frankly was not a guarantee of a secure retirement. The defined-benefit plan gives me long term stability, without having to worry about retirement down the road. This plan played a large role when thinking about my future and career goals and will likely be a reason I continue working for the state for years to come.

North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System's (NDPERS) defined-benefit pension plan is a valuable recruiting tool for North Dakota job growth and provides stable retirement savings for our public workers. We must consider the future of our state and its employees. House Bill 1040 would close the defined-benefit pension plan and cost North Dakota taxpayers \$5.5 billion. This is a fiscally irresponsible choice, and takes the retirement choice away from state employees, leaving them with only the defined contribution plan.

I spent the time working for the state without these benefits, and while I loved my job and the difference I was able to make, the lack of stability caused me to begin to turn my search outward for employment opportunities. Thankfully, I was able to find an FTE position that allowed me to continue serving the citizens of North Dakota while also ensuring my own financial and career success. I strongly believe that without the full NDPERS retirement plan in its current form we will neither attract nor retain new talent in any state agency. I urge a "do not pass" vote.

Sincerely,

Samantha K. Harrison, MPH, CPH, NREMT