



## Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance Senator Longbine, Chairman

March 14, 2017  
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Wichita Public Schools

Chairman Longbine, members of the Committee:

Thank you for reviewing the working after retirement provisions. Schools need qualified substitutes to fill in when employees are absent. On any school day Wichita requires 200 to 450 substitutes who are able to offer students a seamless educational experience. An absence in an elementary school influences an entire classroom of students. At the secondary level students each class period are impacted. Our goal is to provide high quality substitutes who guide teaching and learning for students.

The best qualified substitutes – either licensed or classified – are former employees who have retired. Retirees know our procedures, systems and protocols. They are able to enter a classroom or the school's front office and seamlessly fill the position. However the working after retirement rules make it difficult for retirees to fill these roles.

The working after retirement matrix has twelve different categories depending on the date of retirement and employer; plus daily call substitutes. Wichita has about 325 retirees in the substitute pool. Hiring a retiree requires research to determine retirement date and correct category. A retiree must be enrolled both at the local level and by KPERS personnel. When the retiree does not work during a pay period they must be unenrolled by both the district and KPERS; and when the retiree works again they must be enrolled (again) by the district and KPERS. A cumbersome and time consuming process on the part of both the district and KPERS.

Each transaction, whether determining the correct matrix out of a dozen possibilities or the enroll/unenroll process are each an opportunity for unintended errors.

Mr. Chairman, we would encourage the committee to simplify the working after retirement rules by exempting substitutes (licensed or classified) from the surcharge along with the cumbersome enroll/unenroll processes. A substitute (daily or long-term) is generally filling in for an absent employee who continues to support the KPERS system.

Going forward we would urge the committee to simplify the rules. Again, if the position is already supporting KPERS through the monthly payroll deduction, the retired substitute should be exempt from paying an additional surcharge. This could be accomplished through a straightforward covered or non-covered rule. A KPERS covered position would not have an earning limitation but would require the surcharge, allowing districts to hire retirees into full-time positions. Non-covered positions would apply to temporary or longterm subs, with an earnings cap and no surcharge.

After a number of meetings with KPERS we understand their goal to encourage people to work longer. Although most school retirees do not return to work, for the limited number who would engage this possibility, a longer six-month waiting period might encourage this group to keep working.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for your work on these important issues.