

Sara Cohen
42 Arlington Street • Medford, MA 02155

October 31, 2013

The Honorable William N. Brownsberger, Chair
The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
Joint Committee on Public Service
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs Brownsberger and Michlewitz:

My name is Sara Cohen and I work for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation. I work to protect and manage fresh water resources for the Commonwealth, and I am a member of MOSES, the Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers & Scientists.

I chose to work in the public sector in order to be part of decisions that directly benefit the public good. The choice had its financial repercussions, as I could have made a higher salary in the private sector, but it has been a fulfilling and satisfying choice for me, and I have so far not had regrets.

Right when I vested, I had my first child. I decided I wanted to be more available to her, as well as future children and reduced my schedule to 3/5^{ths} time. I believed that since I had vested, I could count on retiree healthcare coverage for me and my family, which has always been the retiree benefit that is most important to me.

However, with the proposed House Bill 59, continuing to work part-time puts me at risk of losing retiree healthcare. I would now have to work an additional 17 years beyond vesting to be eligible for *any* retiree healthcare and would need to work until age 74 to receive the benefit I am currently entitled to and have been counting on since vesting. My whole family relies on my health insurance coverage, and I don't want to have to choose between receiving this benefit in retirement and continuing to make the choice that I feel is right for me as a parent,

As a young scientist coming out of graduate school with a lot of options, I would have weighed my choices differently had I known this key benefit was 30 years away, rather than 10, and unattainable if I wanted to work part-time to raise a family. This proposal hurts those of us who have already made choices based on a particular balance of the benefits and costs of working for the state and further reduces the incentives that draw young scientists and other professionals to state service.

Please know, the healthcare benefit is the benefit that matters most to me and my family both now and in retirement. Please STOP H59!

Sincerely yours,

Sara Cohen
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