



Dear Senator/Assemblyman

As a library employee, I have grave concerns about the unintended consequences of the pension reform legislation which is moving quickly forward in the legislature.

Libraries are different from many other areas of public service. Many libraries (both public and state colleges) are open between 50-60 hours per week and need a large number of workers to adequately serve the public. The average weekly rate for these employees is relatively low. The ability to contribute to the state pension system even for part-time employees is a very important benefit.

People make career choices based on many variable including benefits. Library personnel are career public servants and the changes which are being proposed will have a disproportionate effect on the members of our profession. Because of family considerations, many individuals work both full time and part-time during their careers. Often there is a break in service for family obligations. The ability to return to the defined pension system on a part time basis is often an important consideration. The elimination of pension benefits under PERS which S1962 is proposing for part-time employees may force future employees to consider other career options.

Another bill (S1965) would define eligibility for the State Health Benefits Program to be limited to new full time employees who work 35 hours per week. Anything under 35 hours would be considered part-time. Although this only applies to those enrolled in SHBP, we have already seen other public employee health care programs in New Jersey limit health care benefits only to those who work 35 hours per week. We have strong anecdotal evidence that some jurisdictions are already implementing this employment practice and limiting work to 30-34 hours a week so the employee can be considered part-time. We strongly support providing some options for part-time employees to receive some compensation for health benefits such as a reduced rate to participate in a health insurance program.

We would also like you to reconsider the limits in S1969. Many of our librarians currently work full time at one library and then work part-time at another library at night or on weekends. Consideration must be given to those whose final pension income will be limited because they need several jobs to support themselves. We, unfortunately, can foresee more people working several part-time jobs in the future and this will severely limit their future pension benefits.

The New Jersey Library Association believes that the unintended consequence of this bill will be the elimination of many full time employees in our libraries with many local jurisdictions only offering part-time employment to reduce benefit costs. This will limit the career options of many individuals. We will be unable to attract qualified individuals into our profession because the career employment opportunities will not be available to them.

Please support the continuation of critical employment benefits for those who choose public service as a career.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Tumulty, Executive Director

