

**From:** [Renee Skjersaa](#)  
**To:** [JWMCC Exhibits](#)  
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I am a middle school math teacher, working in Bend, Oregon, and a Tier 2 PERS member. I have been a public school teacher for the past 19 years and have watched education become less and less of a priority for the State of Oregon. The economy has fallen and risen and it is almost comical that education gets cut everytime things are bad and doesn't go up when things are good. I've stuck with teaching through the challenging times, understanding that it is a public service job and not a career where people become wealthy. My rationale was a decent retirement benefit. SB 1049 harms my retirement security by making unaffordable cuts to my individual account program.

According to PERS analysis, my IAP would be cut 12.5%. This is, in essence, a tax on my retirement benefits to pay the state's obligation to retirees. These cuts are unfair and illegal and hurt working people like me. I excel in my work every day. I have kept my end of the deal. I urge you to vote NO on SB 1049 and keep your promise to people like me.

30% of my colleagues are eligible to retire today. If SB 1049 passes, we will have a rush of retirements. It is already hard to recruit and retain qualified educators when wages in Washington are 20% more than the Portland metro area and earn 22% PER WEEK less than private sector according to recent analysis by the Oregon Center for Public Policy. Many of us have second jobs just to make ends meet. Teachers pay for supplies out of pocket, are dealing with some of the largest classroom sizes in the country. We do this work because we believe in our students and want to be there for them. We have accepted lower salaries and difficult working conditions and last week you saw us turnout in force not for ourselves, but for our students. But in exchange for lower salaries, we were promised a secure retirement and over the past 20 years that has been chipped away. Now you are asking us to take a further reduction.

*Renee Skjersaa*

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