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Sent: Sunday, September 18, 2022 9:14 PM
To: Office State Actuary, WA
Subject: Letter to The Honorable Steve Conway Chair and members of the Select Committee of Pension Policy
Attachments: Letter to Select Committee on Pension Policy.docx

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September 18, 2022

The Honorable Steve Conway Chair Select Committee on Pension Policy P.O. Box 40429
Olympia, WA 98504-042

Dear Chair Conway:

I am writing to ask you and the members of the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCC) to take immediate action to restore a permanent cost of living adjustment (COLA) to Plan 1 retirees.

I deeply appreciate the one-time COLA you secured for Plan 1 retirees like me in the last legislative session. The COLA was helpful and provided temporary relief. That said, I know that the SCPP is committed to ensuring equity in the pension systems. However, one-time COLAs, while deeply appreciated, are short-term fixes that never address the real problem: the long-standing systemic inequity that plagues Plan 1 retirees. Year-after-year the state's oldest retirees, who historically receive the lowest pensions, continue to lose purchasing power.

I was one the many state employees who retired before the PERS 1 COLA was taken away. This year has been extremely difficult to budget for the extraordinary high cost increases in food, gas and medical supplies. I am forced to limit our meals to the basics. I am cleaning and reusing medical supplies where I can rather than replacing them. At age 75, I am painting my house rather than contracting it out.

Only a permanent COLA guarantees financial, food, and housing security in retirement.

With the pay down of the unfunded liability in the Plan 1 pension plan on the horizon, the Retired Public Employees Council (RPEC) asks that you work this legislative session to codify, in law, a trigger point by which the state will fund a permanent COLA for Plan 1 retirees.

I hope we can count on you to embrace this request and lead the path forward to legislation to finally fix this problem.

Thank you for giving RPEC's request your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gary R. Westby

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