



---

# HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

**May 6, 2025**

## **Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government Testimony on Senate Bill 170**

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk and committee members for hearing Senate Bill (SB) 170, which would allow Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) employers, such as the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), local units of government, and schools, to re-hire individuals who had previously retired.

Currently, retired employees receiving a monthly WRS benefit cannot maintain their monthly retirement benefit and be re-hired for more than two-thirds of full-time by the same, or another WRS participating employer. Unfortunately, these restrictions worsen Wisconsin's current workforce challenges.

SB 170 introduces key provisions to balance these concerns. The bill:

- Maintains the requirement for a break in service to ensure compliance with bona fide retirement standards.
- Requires full employer contributions for rehired annuitants to preserve the WRS-covered payroll base, ensuring that positions filled by retirees remain financially viable.
- Does not require rehired retirees to contribute to WRS.

I consistently hear about the workforce challenges facing employers across my district and the public sector is not immune from these challenges. Wisconsin's aging population and declining birthrate are magnifying these challenges even more, especially in rural areas. It is crucial to explore all potential solutions to recruit and retain workers across all sectors, including police and fire departments, county and municipal governments, and school districts.

For example, the current restrictions make it difficult for our technical colleges to hire retired law enforcement or firefighters to work as public safety instructors for the new students in their law enforcement and fire programs. In my southwestern Wisconsin district, they could hire a retiree from Illinois or Iowa without any restrictions on the number of hours that person could work.

By passing SB 170, public sector employers will have an additional tool to address workforce shortages while maintaining the stability of the WRS. This important legislation will support Wisconsin's public workforce and ensure continuity in essential services.

Thank you for scheduling this public hearing today. I appreciate your consideration of this legislation and look forward to the discussion.



# ROBERT WITTKE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 63<sup>RD</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

(608) 237-9163

Toll-Free: (888) 534-0063

Rep.Wittke@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 8953

Madison, WI 53708-8953

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government  
Public Hearing - May 6, 2025

---

Thank you, Chair and Committee Members, for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 170, which addresses rehired annuitants in the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS). While I regret that I cannot be present today due to a prior commitment, I appreciate the opportunity to share this written testimony in support of the bill.

SB 170—and its companion bill, Assembly Bill 196—is a thoughtful response to Wisconsin's workforce shortages. It offers a practical tool for public employers to fill critical vacancies by rehiring experienced retirees, without compromising the long-term integrity of the WRS.

This bill was carefully developed with Sen. Marlein to balance flexibility in hiring with fiscal responsibility. Key provisions of SB 170 include:

- A required break in service to meet federal standards for bona fide retirement.
- Full employer contributions for rehired retirees to maintain the health of the WRS-covered payroll base.
- No WRS contributions required from the rehired annuitants themselves.

These safeguards ensure that positions filled by retirees remain sustainable and that the system remains secure for all members.

Thank you again for your attention to this important issue. I respectfully encourage the committee to move SB 170 forward to an executive session for further consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert O. Wittke



**STATE OF WISCONSIN**  
**Department of Employee Trust Funds**  
A. John Voelker  
SECRETARY

Wisconsin Department  
of Employee Trust Funds  
PO Box 7931  
Madison WI 53707-7931  
1-877-533-5020 (toll free)  
Fax 608-267-4549  
eff.wi.gov

**Remarks to the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government**

**2025 Senate Bill 170**

**Tarna Hunter, Budget and Management Director, Department of Employee Trust Funds**

**May 6, 2025**

ETF is the state agency that administers the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) and several other fringe benefit programs for state and local government, university, and school district employees across Wisconsin. ETF is a non-cabinet agency. We do retirement estimates and calculations, member counseling, education presentations, and all accounting and actuarial work. Our sister agency, the State of Wisconsin Investment Board, is responsible for investing the assets of the WRS.

ETF administers the WRS on behalf of over 1600 public employers, who have a diverse range of workforce needs and employment practices. The WRS has over 690,000 total members; of which approximately 237,000 are retirees and 265,000 are active employees. Over 70 percent of active employees work for local units of government and school districts around the state.

The topic of rehired annuitants is important for the WRS, both in terms of compliance and perception. In 2012, the Legislative Audit Bureau completed an audit of WRS annuitants hired by WRS employers. Following the audit, 2013 Act 20 made statutory changes to WRS return-to-work laws, including increasing the break-in-service from 30 days to 75 days and requiring annuity suspension if a retiree works over two-thirds of full-time in a 12-month period. To properly administer these laws, ETF has invested additional resources to enhance our employer compliance and education efforts. We have revised the WRS Administration Manual, issued new Employer Bulletins, and developed training materials, including print and video. We put in place new systems to track rehired annuitants to ensure compliance with the law and gather more complete data on the rehiring of annuitants.

Since 2013 Act 20, every legislative session has included proposals to change the return-to-work laws (to both the break in service requirement and the annuity suspension requirement). Further, there have been bills that have individually targeted return-to-work laws for teachers, protectives, and law enforcement officers. There have also been proposals to apply changes to all employment categories uniformly.

When evaluating any change to the WRS, ETF begins its assessment by asking the following questions:

- Is the change inconsistent with state and federal laws?
- Will the change diminish the sustainability and integrity of the trust fund?
- Does it add unnecessary complexity?

- Will it diminish the administrative efficiency for ETF, employers, or members?

We would like to thank the authors for soliciting input from ETF on WRS return-to-work laws. SB 170 allows an annuitant to return to work with an employer who participates in the WRS, work two-thirds of full-time, and elect to not become a participating employee for purposes of the WRS, and instead continue to receive their annuity for up to 60 months. Additionally, the bill requires WRS employers that hire these annuitants to make payments to ETF equal to what they would have paid as required contributions for an active employee. Finally, the bill repeals two obsolete provisions related to WRS return-to-work laws created during the public health emergency declared on March 12, 2020, by executive order 72, which ended on May 11, 2023.

This bill applies WRS return-to-work laws uniformly to all employment classifications, which reduces complexity and provides administrative efficiency for ETF, employers, and members. Additionally, the bill safeguards the WRS by requiring the employer pay the employer contribution on return-to-work retirees and limiting the amount of time a retiree can return-to-work for a WRS employer and not have their annuity suspended.

Finally, current law provides that employees who retire must have a break in service of 75 days. The break in service is necessary to comply with the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), which requires a bona fide retirement for an employee to be eligible to receive retirement benefits from tax-qualified retirement plans such as the WRS. The IRC does not dictate a specific waiting period but requires that retirement benefits generally cannot be distributed to members unless there has been a clear indication of complete severance of the employment relationship with the former employer. SB 170 preserves the current break in service requirement of 75 days, which ETF supports. Generally, the longer the waiting period, the more likely it is that the retirement will be viewed as bona fide.

We understand the practice of rehiring annuitants can be an important tool for employers who engage in the practice, allowing them to fill a position for a relatively short term until a permanent replacement can be found. We hope this information is helpful.



May 6, 2025

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government on Senate Bill 170, relating to rehiring WRS annuitants**

**By Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, Teacher  
President of the Wisconsin Education Association Council**

My name is Peggy Wirtz-Olsen. I am a high school art and English teacher and President of the Wisconsin Education Association Council, our state’s largest union of educators – including nearly 15,000 retired educators.

Senate Bill 170 would make changes to state statute regarding the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS), affecting educators who are drawing a pension payment (annuity) from the WRS.

Wisconsin’s school staffing crisis has continued to worsen over more than a decade and is now considered a critical issue in districts’ ability to deliver the excellent education Wisconsin Public Schools provide. There are many factors causing the shortage – from lagging educator pay deterring qualified individuals from entering the field to an ever-increasing lack of professional autonomy in the classroom.

The Wisconsin Education Association Council has partnered with parents, school boards, principals, administrators, and other groups on solutions. Our union is the driving force behind Educators Rising, a high school club for students interested in becoming teachers, mentoring interested teens in the career path and helping them prepare for the rigors of Wisconsin’s high standards for licensure.

We also run a similar program at the college level, Aspiring Educators, which prepares college students for today’s teaching in places like Madison, Eau Claire and in your district, Chairman Tomczyk, at UW-Stevens Point. Beyond working with future teachers, we have partnered with the Wisconsin School Boards Association, Association of Wisconsin School Administrators and Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators on a platform for teacher retention.

Nobody is more committed to solving the crisis than those of us who are face-to-face with students every day. Our students deserve the most excellent educators, every day. The way things are now, our schools are often struggling every day to provide staffing. What that looks like to a classroom teacher like me is that you’re often working with two classes at a time, making one-on-one attention impossible. Perhaps there is a staffer on an emergency license covering a course, instead of a teacher specially trained in the subject. Other times, we’re juggling responsibilities and filling in wherever we’re needed all day long – without time for preparation, parent emails, phone calls or lunch. It’s exhausting and it’s happening day after day.

Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, President  
Bob Baxter, Executive Director

That's why I'm here today in support of this bipartisan bill. I believe this bill can be one part of a larger solution to the school staffing crisis. By making it possible for retired educators to return to the classroom when they are interested, we can alleviate some of the overload on current teachers without penalizing those who retired after a lifetime of service. Wisconsin is rich in the experience and dedication of our retired teachers and staff. Our state should embrace them for the benefit of our students.

Right now, a retired educator hired into a WRS position, lasting 365 consecutive days and 880 hours per fiscal year, does not have the option to choose whether to be a participating WRS employee. Instead, that person's annuity – their pension payment – is automatically suspended.

This penalty for continuing to teach after a career of demonstrated commitment to students is taking many very qualified, license-holding educators off the table as school employees. They tell me that they can return to work in a different job without forgoing their hard-earned pension, yet to return to what they're best at – teaching – they must forego the benefit they earned from a career of dedication. Others, those close to the borders of surrounding states especially, resume teaching in other states without forfeiting their WRS pension payments.

The need for school staff goes far beyond teachers, and so the Wisconsin Education Association Council appreciates that this bill will extend to equally important education support staff, like paraprofessionals and administrative assistants, and certainly includes the counselors, social workers, nurses, and therapists who keep our students safe and healthy.

As you debate this bill, I'd call special attention to the provision requiring that at least 75 days have elapsed since the participant's termination of employment. While I understand this bill impacts a variety of annuitants, except it appears some protective services that have been carved out for a separate treatment in SB 35-AB 36 and SB 105-AB 138—WEAC is asking for school employees to be added to those bills—please note that the time between a school year ending and the beginning of reporting days for teachers is often less than 75 days, which may create a time crunch and urgency that could be lessened with a shorter break-in-service requirement.

Retired teachers I know say, "Our commitment to students and public education never retires." It's the hope of tens of thousands of educator-members of the Wisconsin Education Association Council that your commitment to students and public education is as great as ours and that you will support Senate Bill 170.

Thank you.

# **PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS OF WISCONSIN, INC.**

321 EAST MAIN STREET, SUITE 200, MADISON, WI 53703-2840

PHONE: (608) 251-5832 / EMAIL: PFFWOFFICE@GMAIL.COM

MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

MEMBER OF WISCONSIN STATE AFL-CIO



**MAHLON MITCHELL**  
STATE PRESIDENT

**RYAN HINTZ**  
STATE VICE-PRESIDENT

**STEVE WILDING**  
STATE SEC. / TREAS.

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

From: Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin

Date: May 6, 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 170 relating to rehired annuitants in the Wisconsin Retirement System

---

My name is Mahlon Mitchell, and I am here today as the President of the Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin representing over 4,000 firefighters across Wisconsin. I also serve as President of Fire Fighters Local 311 which represents over 500 firefighters and paramedics serving communities across Dane County and was recently elected 5<sup>th</sup> District Vice President for the International Association of Fire Fighters.

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk and members of the committee for holding a hearing today on Senate Bill 170 and thank you Senator Marklein for introducing this common-sense legislation. I'd be remiss if I also didn't thank and acknowledge Chairman Tomczyk and others for authoring similar legislation, which the PFFW also supports.

It is widely understood that in Wisconsin, Fire and EMS retirees interested in further serving their communities post-retirement as faculty for training programs would see their hard-earned WRS retirement benefits negatively impacted. As a result, these individuals do not apply for roles at technical colleges.

I've been a firefighter for nearly 30 years serving the Dane County area. I have two brothers – one is a firefighter in Saint Paul, Minnesota and the other a firefighter in Atlanta, Georgia. If I wanted to join Madison College post-retirement as faculty for any of the Fire or EMS programs, under current law I would need to suspend my pension, a pension that I earned. Meanwhile both of my brothers could take that position without being penalized. I've worked for Madison Fire Department for nearly 30 years, pay taxes here and understand the fire service in Wisconsin, yet I'd be penalized.

Current state law disadvantages experienced public safety professionals who have served their community – *in Wisconsin* – the option to come out of retirement and train future public safety professionals or serve their community in a leadership role. Current law incentivizes the hiring of out-of-state retirees from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan and every other state, but Wisconsin. This seems counterproductive to putting Wisconsin and Wisconsinites first. We all want qualified public safety professionals in our communities, but to get there we need to be able to recruit and retain qualified leaders and instructors. Why penalize Wisconsinites who spent their careers serving their communities?

The lack of faculty is making it difficult to expand public safety training programs. We see vacancies for public safety positions across Wisconsin, and we're constantly talking about it in this building. We know there is a need, yet current law makes it even more difficult to recruit and retain qualified instructors to grow these training programs. ***Without instructors you cannot grow training programs, and you cannot put qualified public safety professionals in our communities.***

Senate Bill 170 is a cost-effective and obvious solution to grow training programs and put qualified public safety professionals in our communities. One consideration that I ask of you, a simple amendment to remove the 60-month cap on public safety annuitants, aligning it with previously introduced legislation.

Thank you for your time today and I'm available for any questions.



## Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance

May 6, 2025

**To: Members, Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government**

**From: Cathy Olig, Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA) Executive Director**

**Re: Support of Senate Bill 170**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bills 170 relating to rehired annuitants in the Wisconsin Retirement System.

I am Cathy Olig, the executive director of the Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA), representing twenty-six public school districts serving approximately 180,000 students in southeastern Wisconsin. Our members include superintendents, business managers, and school board members. I'm glad to be here with superintendents from Kenosha Unified School District and the School District of Greenfield.

**We support SB 170 as it will help school districts address immediate staffing needs by allowing retirees to return to work.**

All districts are experiencing staffing shortages in every single job category. Schools are facing increased labor costs in a competitive labor market, where it's common to see educators move districts at an increased rate or leave the profession entirely. According to a recent Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article, one in five teachers in Wisconsin will leave their schools each year. This harms student learning.

Districts need flexibility to rehire retired staff for critical full-time, part-time, and substitute teaching positions. This legislation will help fill hard-to-hire positions and will impact multiple roles: professional educators, especially in math and AP classes, teacher mentors, business managers, special education staff, school safety managers, and school bus drivers, to name a few. This simple change will provide much needed flexibility for public school districts and can quickly help with current staffing shortfalls.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require any additional information.



[schoolsalliance.com](http://schoolsalliance.com)

| [swsaexecdirector5@gmail.com](mailto:swsaexecdirector5@gmail.com)

| 262-388-9004



4850 South 60<sup>th</sup> Street ■ Greenfield, Wisconsin 53220 ■ Phone: 414-855-2050 ■ Fax: 414-855-2051

May 6, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Local Government and Transportation

From: Dr. Lisa Elliott, Superintendent

Re: Senate Bill 170

Good afternoon members of the Senate Committee on Local Government and Transportation. My name is Lisa Elliott, Superintendent of the School District of Greenfield, and I'm here today to offer testimony regarding Senate Bill 170, specifically focusing on the positive impact it can have on the teacher pipeline issues facing Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's future workforce is currently sitting in our classrooms across the state, therefore it's crucial to recognize the foundational role that a strong education system plays in the overall well-being and future success of our communities and the prosperity of our state.

Wisconsin is currently grappling with significant teacher pipeline challenges. We are seeing fewer individuals entering and/or completing teacher preparation programs, creating a long-term concern for the future of our education system. We must find innovative strategies to attract more college students into teacher preparation programs to ensure a sustainable supply of educators in the years to come.

However, this long-term strategy does not address the immediate crisis we face today: a shortage of professional educators to fill current vacancies in our classrooms. This shortage directly impacts the quality of education our students receive.

Senate Bill 170 presents an opportunity to address this immediate need. By allowing rehired annuitants to return to the classroom without having their annuity payments cease, we can tap into a valuable pool of experienced and qualified educators who are willing and able to serve our students now.

While factors like school climate, educational materials, and curriculum are important, the quality of the teacher in the classroom has the most direct and significant impact on a student's educational journey and ultimate success. Allowing experienced annuitants to return to teaching will directly benefit student learning by ensuring that hard to fill positions (for example: special education, math, science, tech ed) or positions that would remain vacant (resulting in increased class sizes or canceled programs) will have qualified professionals at the helm.

Therefore, I urge the committee to consider the critical link between a strong education system and the future of our state. By authorizing the provisions within Senate Bill 170 that allow rehired annuitants to return to the classroom without jeopardizing their retirement benefits, you can directly address the immediate teacher shortage and positively impact student learning across Wisconsin.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this vital issue.



**Kenosha  
Unified**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT



To: Members, Senate Committee on Education  
From: Tarik Hamdan, Chief Financial Officer  
Dr. Todd Price, School Board Member  
Dr. Jeffrey Weiss, Superintendent  
Re: Support SB 170

Thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding SB 170. I am Jeff Weiss, superintendent for the Kenosha Unified School District. With me is board member, Dr. Todd Price and KUSD CFO Tarik Hamdan.

It is important for me to share some background regarding the Kenosha Unified School District. We are the third largest school district in the state with approximately 18,500 students. We are home to Lakeview HS which was recently ranked the second best high school in the state by U.S. News. Prairie Lane Elementary was nominated for the Blue Ribbon School Award based on high levels of student achievement. Our high quality fine arts programs are known throughout the state for excellence. And our theater program is nationally recognized, as well. We have graduates who are performing on Broadway.

We are here today to advocate for SB 170 that reduces restrictions for rehiring annuitants. Large districts, like Kenosha Unified, are facing severe staffing shortages since fewer college students are entering education. According to a March 22, 2022 Education Week article by Madeline Will, “between the 2008-09 and the 2018-19 academic years, the number of people completing a teacher-education program declined by almost a third. Traditional teacher-preparation programs saw the largest decline—35 percent—but alternative programs experienced drops, too.”

This decline in the number of candidates for teaching positions is being compounded by the number of new teachers who are leaving the profession. There is recently released data from the Department of Public Instruction that underscores the importance of retaining our teachers. In Wisconsin, 45% of teachers leave public education within seven years of beginning their career. This number jumps to 54% if this is isolated to special education teachers. The overwhelming majority of our principals and administrators were teachers first. The alarming number of teachers leaving the profession not only affects the classroom; it also affects the next generation of school leaders.

Anecdotally, I began my teaching career as a secondary English teacher in 1994. At that time, there was no shortage of teachers. There was a shortage of open positions. The path to a full time teaching position



262-359-6300



[www.kusd.edu](http://www.kusd.edu)



3600 52<sup>nd</sup> St., Kenosha, WI 53144



included extended time as a substitute teacher hoping to get noticed by a principal to get the chance at an interview. It was commonplace to have 40 to 50 applications for each open position. This year, KUSD experienced over forty positions that had to be filled by a long term substitute teacher or a teacher on an emergency license. This has a negative impact on student learning.

There are many causes and solutions to the teacher shortage. One easy solution is allow recently retired teachers to reenter the workforce without penalty. Currently, there are several recently retired teachers working in KUSD. Allowing more retired teachers to reenter the field will have a positive impact on student learning for Kenosha Unified and the rest of the state.



316 W. Washington Ave., Suite 600  
Madison, WI 53703  
Phone: 608-267-2380  
Fax: 608-267-0645  
Email: [league@lwm-info.org](mailto:league@lwm-info.org)  
Website: [lwm-info.org](http://lwm-info.org)

To: Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government  
From: Toni Herkert, Government Affairs Director, and Evan Miller, Government Affairs Specialist  
League of Wisconsin Municipalities  
Date: May 6, 2025  
RE: Senate Bill 170 - Rehired Annuitants

Chairman Tomczyk, Vice-Chair Hutton, and Committee Members,

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities is a nonpartisan, nonprofit membership organization that advocates for the interests of our over 600 member cities and villages, large and small, urban and rural, throughout the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of Senate Bill 170. Wisconsin's municipal governments are grappling with significant workforce challenges driven by demographic shifts, inability to compete with private sector wages, and growing complexity in what's being asked of local government workers. These challenges exist across the board in city and village governments, including with police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians, but also with public works staff, water and wastewater utility operators, clerks, treasurers, administrators, and more.

The League routinely hears from members that post an open position at or near the highest wage they can reasonably budget, and that position will not see a single qualified applicant, or sometimes even a single applicant at all. Many municipalities have scaled back staffing in recent decades, with 2021 seeing 11.5% fewer local government full-time employees per capita when compared to 2002. More so than ever before, each local government employee plays a vital and indispensable role in ensuring that the services their residents, who are also your constituents, expect can be delivered and the statutory compliance the state requires can be fulfilled.

With such an imperative need to keep these roles filled, when a position opens, if no qualified applicants are available, the responsibilities of that position still need to be completed. While the municipality may presently look to have a Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) annuitant return to work to temporarily fill that position, the retiree is much more likely to seek non-governmental employment to prevent the need to suspend their annuity payments. Senate Bill 170 would make returning to work with a municipal employer a much more viable option for both the retiree and the municipal employer looking to fill these critical vacancies and ensure the uninterrupted delivery of services to their residents.

While the League is supportive of Senate Bill 170, we would request that the provision requiring participating employers that rehire an annuitant to make payments equal to the amount of contributions that would have otherwise been required for that employee is removed from the bill. One of the reasons municipalities are in the workforce crisis they're currently facing is due to the inability to offer competitive pay due to severely constrained budgets. Allowing annuitants to be rehired without requiring these extra annuity payments will allow those funds to be better utilized elsewhere in the municipality, including in efforts to retain other critical municipal employees in public safety and public works.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation and the League's comments on Senate Bill 170. If you have any questions, you can contact Toni Herkert at [therkert@lwm-info.org](mailto:therkert@lwm-info.org) or Evan Miller at [emiller@lwm-info.org](mailto:emiller@lwm-info.org).



May 6, 2025

**Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government  
Department of Public Instruction Testimony  
2025 SB 170**

Thank you, Chairperson Tomczyk and members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government Committee, for holding this hearing today. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) submits this testimony and registers in support of SB 170.

Since the passing and signing of 2013 Act 20, the 2013-15 Biennial Budget, three State Superintendents of Public Instruction, along with the major Wisconsin school district leadership and educator associations, have advocated to provide our local school districts with needed tools for staffing positions in a time of worker shortages in all areas, including licensed and highly trained staff. Staffing our school districts in all roles is a major issue across our state. It is a rural, urban and suburban issue (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2024).

For decades and decades before the signing of 2013 Act 20, our local schools were more readily able to hire post-retirement Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) annuitants. This was especially the case for retirees that left employment at the end of a school year, on June 30<sup>th</sup> of a given year, being able to be hired to work at the start the new school year in September to fill a shortage. In 2013, Act 20 requirements lengthened the elapsed time period required before a WRS annuitant can be rehired from 30 to 75 days and suspended the participant's annuity if that individual is employed in a WRS-covered position in which that individual is expected to work at least two-thirds of what is considered full-time employment by the Department of Employee Trust Funds. This had an immediate and lasting impact making the staffing of school shortage areas far more difficult resulting in some positions going unfilled or not having fully licensed and/or trained staff. The impact has been felt by members of school communities across our state, and especially by our students.

Allowing annuitants to continue receiving their annuity is a key beneficial change in this bill. With the changes proposed in this bill, we would expect that our local school boards and administrators will be better able to hire experienced, retired educators to fill critical instructional positions when no other candidates are available, particularly those requiring special certifications or licensure as well as hard-to-fill shortage areas, including special education, bilingual education, and STEM fields. Additionally, we expect positive results from this bill in the hiring of other retired, experienced people in instructional, operations and support positions, such as substitute teachers, administrators, food

service workers, coaches, and bus drivers. These rehired annuitants are often saving money for our districts in hard-to-fill positions while the students receive expert services from a proven educator or staff person, and the school district gets the services of an effective educator or staff person at a lower cost for the taxpayers.

We continue to advocate for returning to a 30-day break in service requirement from the current 75-day break as this provides districts with greater ability to staff their schools for the September start of the school year, and more time to recruit during the normal school workforce hiring season.

To meet the great staffing needs our schools face in educating our students, we support SB 170 as a first step in changes to the post-retirement employment of Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) annuitants.

Thank you for allowing DPI to share this testimony. Please direct any questions to John Johnson, Policy Initiatives Advisor, at [john.johnson@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:john.johnson@dpi.wi.gov).

Citations:

Rep. 2022 *Educator Preparation Program and Workforce Analysis Report*. Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2024, <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/education-workforce/pdf/2022-wi-epp-workforce-annual-report.pdf>.