

September 17, 2015

To: Select Committee on Pension Policy
Representative Bruce Chandler, Chair
P.O. Box 40914
Olympia, WA 98504-0914

From: Amy Leang
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Chair Chandler and members of the SCPP:

I am writing to you about a proposal to PERS that I hope you will consider. This proposal comes after my own experience as first a temporary employee/student intern, then as a full-time public employee.

When I first started working for the state Department of Health in December 2013, I really looked forward to signing up for PERS 2 after my employee orientation. I was 22 years old, and it was my first job after college. However, I found out that I was not allowed to enroll. I was apparently already in the PERS 3 system from a previous summer internship at Snohomish County Public Works.

As a student intern at Snohomish County, I did not receive any employee orientation related to retirement and was not represented by a union. I did not know that PERS extended to outside the county and across state agencies. I called DRS and learned from an analyst that there were a few exceptions that would allow a person to switch from PERS 3 to PERS 2; this included evidence that I was misinformed. Thinking that I qualified, I wrote a letter to a PERS Administrator. My efforts did not result in anything except for a PERS administrator confirming that I could not switch because I had clearly signed papers for PERS 3. Under the circumstances of my internship, my age at the time, and newness to the work force, I would contend that my signature did not necessarily equal consent.

I am now almost 25 years old, and it is still a big disappointment for me to think that one summer internship as a college student had perpetually changed my retirement security—from a defined benefit to half of one. I believe this situation has harmed me and my financial future.

My proposal for PERS:

Current employees who were previously employed by local/state agencies who were
1) under 25 years old and
2) in temporary and/or student internships
should be allowed a one-time change in retirement plan (from PERS 3 to PERS 2).

I would add that employees switching plans would be required to withdraw from PERS 3, pay the taxes, and buy into PERS 2 upon switching.

I appreciate your consideration for this proposal and hope that you can help further this issue. Please email me at aleang@uw.edu or call me at [REDACTED] if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Amy Leang

cc: District 22 Legislators
Senator Karen Fraser & Representatives Chris Reykdal and Sam W. Hunt