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Sent: Wednesday, July 6, 2022 11:14 PM
To: Office State Actuary, WA
Subject: PERS 1 & TERS 1 COLAS

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Select Committee on Pension Policy
P.O. Box 40914
Olympia, WA 98504-0914

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in support of restoring a permanent COLA for PERS 1 & TERS 1 retirees. My story is an example of why this is important for so many retired public employees. I worked my whole career for the County. My employer got a good deal: I was a graduate of the University of Washington in Environmental Health and passed the exams as required by the State Merit System and the Washington State Board of Registered Sanitarians, so my education and training were exactly what a small County Health Department needed for a position requiring knowledge in all fields of public health. When I was hired, I was asked how long I would stay, and I replied "At least 5 years." I was also told that although the pay, under \$900/month, was less than I could get with a private employer, I was guaranteed the benefits and job security of a public service job.

I stayed, bought a house, and got married within my first 7 years on the job. The longer I stayed, loyally doing my job to the best of my ability, the more valuable I became in my knowledge of the regulations and ordinances, the geography of the county, and understanding of the local community. I felt I represented the taxpayers well. Unfortunately, there was very little room for advancement starting out with only two other sanitarians, one of which was my supervisor, only 3 years older than myself. So, it took 31 years before he retired and I became Director, supervising 5 other staff. Meanwhile, the secure job became "At-Will."

I would have stayed on until full retirement age, but after 36 years of service the Department Administrator decided to reorganize the office, suddenly eliminating my position to save paying the salary I had taken all those years to earn. I felt the time to retire had come, so I applied for my PERS 1 pension effective January 1st, 2012. Little did I know that my last year of work was the same year the PERS 1 COLA went away. I did not receive a cost-of-living adjustment until 2018.

According to the CPI Inflation Calculator, as of May of this year my costs have risen 29% during my first 10 years of retirement. My highest salaries were only in my last 5 years of work. Those retirees like me who worked back in the 70's and 80's have benefits based on the frugal salaries of those days. Many seniors' current daily expenses such as medications, food, home maintenance & repairs, and insurance have gone up more than those of the general public while on a fixed income and getting virtually 0% interest on anything left in the bank.

We appreciate the well-managed and carefully invested pension system we have in Washington, but don't PERS 1 and TERS 1 retirees deserve an ongoing permanent COLA similar to the other state retirement plans? With current inflation speaking for itself and many legislators being open to solve this discrepancy, I believe now is the time to find a way. As a member of the Retired Public Employees Council, I speak for my fellow members when I ask consideration of reinstating a permanent COLA in a way that addresses the need for the foreseeable future.

Barry Jenkins, Walla Walla

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