

## **MTA Vice President Max Page's Testimony on Early Retirement Bill**

Chairs, members of the committee, my name is Max Page and I'm the vice president of the MTA.

The level of support we have seen from our members regarding this bill has been tremendous. Today I ask you to join these dedicated educators in supporting this legislation by reporting it with a favorable recommendation as quickly as possible.

You just heard from Merrie about the urgency of this legislation. I will now share with you a few key details about the bill. We will also be submitting more comprehensive written testimony, a bill fact sheet and video testimony from dozens of MTA members who were unable to join today's hearing.

H.2620 and S.1791 were modeled after the most recent teacher early retirement law. It will provide economic relief to our K-12 public schools by allowing teachers who are currently eligible to retire to purchase up to five years of service and/or age in order to retire before the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.

For school districts, the potential savings would equal the difference between current and new teachers' salaries less any additional health insurance costs, but total payroll savings will offset any ancillary costs. The bill's voluntary local adoption provision eliminates any unfunded mandates.

The bill also includes an important provision requiring school districts that adopt the bill's provisions to commit to backfilling vacated positions with qualified teachers. This will help to avoid issues such as increases in class size, while also allowing districts to hire new and more diverse educators. The MTA has been advocating for several key policies to help to diversify the educator workforce, which, if implemented, would create a strong educator pipeline for these new opportunities.

The bill's purchase of service/age provision was also designed to prevent a significant negative impact on the security of the state's pension system. It does, however, give the state and the employer the option to help educators offset their purchase costs. This could help ensure that all teachers who wish to retire under the bill can afford to do so.

The bill also allows eligible teachers who retired recently to purchase service and/or age and permits eligible teachers at high risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 to utilize the provision of the bill as soon as needed.

Lastly, some of the bill's timelines have passed, but a second retirement window remains. The MTA welcomes the opportunity to work with the committee to modify dates and to make any other needed changes that align with the goals of the bill. Our hope is that, once passed, this legislation can become a model to extend a similar incentive to all public employees, including public higher education employees and Education Support Professionals in public schools.

Thank you for your attention and favorable consideration of this legislation.