

May 18, 2017

Senator Moore, Representatives Devlin, McGorty and Rutigliano:

As you know, teachers do not receive Social Security; thus their only retirement security comes through the state teacher pension fund. Teachers contribute to the pension with every paycheck, and the state (since 1978) is expected to contribute ("pre-pay") as well. Teachers have done their part, but historically, the state has not.

While the state has done an adequate job of meeting their obligations since 2008, there are exceedingly high "legacy costs" for the pension: debt obligations associated with a criminal underfunding of the pension system for most of the time before.

So now we have a massive state debt obligation. The governor thinks that one way to finance the pension debt obligation is to pass off one-third of the responsibility to the towns. This is like a student who failed to prepare for a test, and then asks their teacher for bonus points. The governor's proposal has irresponsibly rocked town budgets across the state; but we exist in a holding pattern until the General Assembly resolves the very real debt situation at the heart of the proposal.

Teachers in town recently received notice from the superintendent that the possibility remains for programmatic cuts and mass layoffs if the governor's proposal goes through. We were told that if the General Assembly cannot agree on a budget, that the uncertainty will remain through July or possibly August.

This is no way to run an education system. Kids need programs like marching band, athletics and the arts to thrive. They also need class sizes that are not bursting at the seams. Teachers need to be able to plan for the coming school year. And teachers also deserve to have security in the knowledge that the pension to which they have contributed and to which they are entitled, will not be made insecure.

We implore you to resolve the debt situation as soon as possible, and in a way that doesn't attempt to resolve the state's budget problems on the backs of kids and teachers.

We look forward to your response-

Trumbull Education Association
Executive Board