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ORTA Comments June 21, 2018 Dr. Robin Rayfield

STRS Comments - June 21, 2018

(Delivered by ORTA Executive Director Dr. Robin Rayfield in testimony to the STRS Board of Trustees.)

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at the STRS Board of Trustee's meeting. As the Executive Director of the Ohio Retired Teachers Association I represent thousands of STRS beneficiaries.

First let me say 'Thank you' to Director Nehf, Nick Treneff, and Paul Snyder for meeting with Bee Lehner (ORTA President) and myself at ORTA's office on May 30th. I appreciate your willingness to develop a dashboard to reflect a pathway to COLA. I look forward to our next meeting.

My work at ORTA has helped me understand that 'pensions are complex and have many moving parts that are subject to change without notification'. Complex problems often require complex solutions that also have many moving parts.

Currently, ORTA members have demonstrated patience and understanding as the hard-working employees and trustees at STRS work to fortify our pension system and insure that the pensions we all work so hard for will continue for generations to come.

Now, as STRS considers its budget for the next year, I would like to point out that only two of the groups of stakeholders in the STRS pension system have been forced to suffer during this time of strengthening the pension system. Only STRS recipients have felt the pain of the loss of COLA. Only active contributors have felt the increase of member contributions or the requirements to work longer to receive their pensions. Neither the legislators, nor the employees at STRS have felt the economic impact of the loss of COLA or increased work requirements and increased contribution levels.

As I meet with and speak with STRS recipients at local ORTA Chapters around the state I hear the same questions: 'What is the status of our COLA?' or 'How can the employees at STRS receive salary increases while we do not receive our promised COLA?'

As you consider the budget for the next year, I suggest, as a show of good faith, that the employees at STRS share in the sacrifice STRS members are suffering

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through. In other words, I suggest that STRS employees receive no increases in salary or incentive pay until COLA is restored or at least until the pathway to COLA is established.

I close with this simple thought. As a superintendent of schools I could not accept a pay raise, nor could my administrative team or supervisors receive pay increases, unless the employees of the organization received an increase. I recognize that a school district budget is not a great analogy to a pension system such as STRS, but the principal of shared sacrifice is an appropriate analogy.

Thank you for your past work and I look forward to our work together to solve the current problems that our pension system faces.