



TO: Laura Freed, Chair, and Public Employee Benefits Program Board

FROM: Douglas Unger, President, UNLV Chapter, and Southern Nevada Government Affairs Representative, Nevada Faculty Alliance

PUBLIC COMMENT – PEBP BOARD MEETING – March 11, 2021

Doug Unger, UNLV Chapter President, & Southern Nevada Government Affairs Representative, Nevada Faculty Alliance, *for the record*. Though the Agenda for this meeting is a Legislative update to determine PEBP Board positions on several bills for the 81st Nevada Legislature, our state’s Higher Education faculty must express once more our severe disappointment in the plan design process and its demoralizing results. We estimate state employees will lose \$25 Million per year in benefits because of this process; this includes plan designs that increase deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums that will burden the sickest and most vulnerable; an erosion of support for retirees that amounts to a regressive tax; the cleaving in half of our life insurance; and elimination of Long Term Disability insurance we view as both unnecessary and deliberately cruel to state employees who will suffer an accident or illness that prevents them from working and especially to the terminally ill. We understand that many of you on the Board are not in favor of these mandates from Gov.Rec nor how this process happened. We insist this does not have to happen, that there are other less painful solutions.

And now consider how tragic and sadly absurd it will be that this slow moving but no less runaway bureaucratic train of a flawed PEBP plan design process meant to save tens of millions from the state budget due to the pandemic economy will probably continue unstopably even under what is reported will be a *\$3.9 Billion dollar deluge of cash from the American Rescue Plan that intends to help fix this very crisis*. We believe federal rescue funds might help the restoration of benefits to previous levels or at least mitigations to punishing cuts, given enough flexibility and creativity by PEBP along with our strong petitions to the Legislature. Whenever employee advocates raise this possibility, the answer we get is something like, “the cavalry is coming, too bad it’s too late to stop the train.” That can’t be true. The fate of the PEBP budget is up to the Legislature now, and the Board. We request the Board meet in emergency session to determine restoration strategies to be shared with employee advocates so we can make the strong case to Legislators. For example: the Board could ask to delay open enrollment by a month or longer in anticipation of rescue funds—open enrollment delay has been done before without too much disruption. The Board could meanwhile consider how best to repair our plans by restoring Long Term Disability Insurance, retiree contributions, life insurance, and cutting premiums if the high deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums are now too late in the process to revise. This can happen. The money will almost surely be there, thanks to a visionary act of Congress meant to help us all to emerge and recover from this godawful pandemic. State employees deserve this recovery—we’ve earned it, few have worked harder for it, including health professionals and frontline workers risking their lives in this pandemic every day. Health insurance and benefits restorations by PEBP will be essential also for our recovery. Thank you.

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From: Kent Ervin [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2021 11:35 AM
To: Wendi Lunz <wlunz@peb.nv.gov>
Cc: Laura Rich [REDACTED]
Subject: NFA Public Comment for PEBP Board meeting 3/11/2021



Kent Ervin E-R-V-I-N, for the Nevada Faculty Alliance, the association of NSHE college and university faculty statewide, for the record.

Good afternoon Chair Freed, Executive Director Rich, and board members. Thank you for your time and service.

Regarding the list of bills that PEBP is tracking, NFA recommends that the PEBP Board take a position in SUPPORT of AB48, the bill to allow non-state PEBP retirees to reinstate PEBP coverage once per lifetime, as can state retirees. However, we believe the once-in-a-lifetime re-enrollment provision is unnecessarily restrictive overall. It was put into statute in 2011, and it unfairly restricts retirees who might go into and out of employment or spousal coverage from taking advantage of the best health care plan available to them.

Regarding SB40, there is a proposed amendment that would require the data reporting to use standardized national formats, which should avoid any fiscal impact for PEBP.

Regarding SB139, the expansion of services in the bill for certified medically necessary gender affirmation procedures is modest compared with what PEBP already covers. Therefore, we believe the fiscal impact in the staff report is grossly exaggerated. This must be corrected.

Finally, for SB171 we share the concerns of our constituents about being required to use mail delivery for prescriptions, both because of porch theft security and the spoilage of drugs needing cold storage—particularly in hot southern Nevada summers. Patients should be able to opt for alternative delivery methods when needed, which might include pick-up at a shipping center or pharmacy location at a minimum.

The Nevada Faculty Alliance is continuing to advocate at the legislature for the restoration of PEBP benefits including Long-Term Disability Insurance, Medicare retiree HRA contributions, and pre-pandemic employee premiums. We ask that PEBP maintain the maximum possible flexibility in restoring these benefits while the legislative budget process progresses.

Thank you.

Dr. Kent M. Ervin
State Vice President & Legislative Liaison, Nevada Faculty Alliance
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