

STATE OF NEW YORK

5529--A

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 7, 2023

Introduced by Sens. GRIFFO, LANZA, OBERACKER, RHOADS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Civil Service and Pensions -- recommitted to the Committee on Civil Service and Pensions in accordance with Senate Rule 6, sec. 8 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT in relation to enabling public employers to offer certain temporary retirement incentives for certain public employees

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

- 1 Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature finds and declares
2 that the state is experiencing economic difficulties and in order to
3 avoid layoffs of public employees, a retirement incentive is necessary.
4 However, nothing in this act shall be construed to create an expectation
5 of a future or continuing retirement benefit for any public employee who
6 is not eligible to receive and qualify for the retirement benefits in
7 this act during the applicable time periods.
- 8 § 2. Definitions. For purposes of this act, the following terms shall
9 have the following meanings:
- 10 (a) "Retirement system" means the New York state and local employees'
11 retirement system, the New York state teachers' retirement system, the
12 New York city teachers' retirement system, the New York city board of
13 education retirement system or the New York city employees' retirement
14 system, exclusive of the retirement plans established pursuant to
15 sections 13-156 and 13-157 of the administrative code of the city of New
16 York.
- 17 (b) "State employer" means:
- 18 (1) the executive branch of the state;
- 19 (2) the state-operated institutions of the state university of New
20 York;

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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(3) the statutory and contract colleges operated pursuant to section 357 of the education law;

(4) the state university construction fund (hereinafter referred to in this act as the "fund");

(5) a cooperative extension association (hereinafter referred to in this act as the "association");

(6) the city university of New York as defined in subdivision 2 of section 6202 of the education law;

(7) the unified court system;

(8) the senate;

(9) the assembly; and

(10) joint legislative employers.

(c) "Participating employer" means an employer, other than a state employer, which participates in a retirement system. Such term shall include a community college operating under the program of state university of New York.

(d) "Educational employer" means a participating employer which is a school district, a board of cooperative educational services, a vocational education and extension board, an institution for the instruction of the deaf and of the blind pursuant to section 4201 of the education law, or a school district pursuant to section 1 of chapter 566 of the laws of 1967, as amended.

(e) (1) "Eligible employee" means a person who is a member of a retirement system who is an employee in the executive branch of a state employer or an employee of a state employer or a participating employer who has attained fifty years of age and has at least twenty-five years of creditable service or has attained fifty-five years of age and has at least ten years of creditable service in a retirement system, but such term shall not include the following persons:

(i) elected officials, judges or justices appointed to or serving in a court of record and acting village justices;

(ii) chief administrative officers of participating employers which participate in a teachers' retirement system;

(iii) officers described in sections 4, 41-a, 46, 61, 70, 70-a, 169 (including those officers whose salary is established pursuant to salary plans described in subdivision 3 of section 169), 180 and subdivision 1 of section 41 of the executive law and any agency or department head appointed by the governor, comptroller or attorney general;

(iv) appointed members of boards or commissions, any of whose members are appointed by the governor or by another state officer or body;

(v) nonjudicial officers and employees of the unified court system, unless the chief administrator of the courts elects as provided herein, which election shall cover only nonjudicial officers and employees holding positions in any title in the classified service of the unified court system;

(vi) officers or employees of the senate unless the senate adopts a resolution authorizing the temporary president to file the election as provided in this subdivision;

(vii) officers or employees of the assembly unless the assembly adopts a resolution authorizing the speaker of the assembly to file the election as provided in this subdivision; and

(viii) officers or employees of joint legislative employers unless:

a. with respect to officers or employees of the legislative library, legislative messenger service, legislative health service, legislative ethics committee, the legislative bill drafting commission, and the joint line of the legislative task force on demographic research and

1 reapportionment, the senate and assembly adopt a concurrent resolution
2 authorizing the temporary president of the senate and the speaker of the
3 assembly to jointly file an election as provided in this subdivision;

4 b. with respect to officers or employees of components of the senate
5 as identified pursuant to section 90 of the legislative law, the senate
6 adopts a resolution authorizing the temporary president to file an
7 election for officers or employees of those components designated in
8 such resolution; and

9 c. with respect to officers or employees of components of the assembly
10 as identified pursuant to section 90 of the legislative law, the assem-
11 bly adopts a resolution authorizing the speaker of the assembly to file
12 an election for officers or employees of those components designated in
13 such resolution.

14 (2) Any election under subparagraphs (v) through (viii) of paragraph
15 one of this subdivision to make available the retirement incentive
16 provided by this act shall be in writing and filed with the state comp-
17 troller not later than ninety days after the effective date of this act.
18 Notwithstanding any other provision of this act, each such filing shall
19 specify the commencement date of the open period.

20 (3) For the purposes of paragraph (vi), (vii) or (viii) of paragraph
21 one of this subdivision, an employee of the legislature shall be as such
22 term is defined in section 7-a, 7-b or 7-d of the legislative law or by
23 any other provision of law which classifies employees of an entity to be
24 legislative employees for all purposes, but shall not include senators
25 or members of the assembly. The term "joint legislative employer" shall
26 mean legislative commissions, committees, task forces, councils or simi-
27 lar bodies whose membership is comprised of both senators and assembly
28 members, or which consist of commissioners, or the majority of whose
29 membership is appointed by one or more of the following: the temporary
30 president of the senate, the speaker of the assembly, the minority lead-
31 er of the senate, and/or the minority leader of the assembly. The tempo-
32 rary president of the senate and the speaker of the assembly shall be
33 the joint legislative employer of the employees of the legislature
34 referred to in sections 7-a and 7-b of the legislative law.

35 (f) "College faculty" means an employee, not in the classified
36 service, of a state employer described in paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of
37 subdivision (b) of this section or of a community college who is a
38 member of a teachers' retirement system, or the New York state and local
39 employees' retirement system.

40 (g) "Active service" means service while being paid on the payroll,
41 provided that:

42 (1) a leave of absence with pay shall be deemed active service;

43 (2) other approved leave without pay not to exceed twelve weeks from
44 February 1, 2025 and the commencement of the designated open period; and

45 (3) the period of time subsequent to the June 2025 school term and on
46 or before August 31, 2025 for a teacher (or other employee employed on a
47 school-year basis) who is otherwise in active service on the effective
48 date of this act shall be deemed active service.

49 (h) "Open period" means the period beginning with the commencement
50 date as defined in subdivision (i) of this section and shall be ninety
51 days in length, provided however that there shall be only one such open
52 period and any such period shall not extend beyond September 30, 2025
53 for a state employer and December 31, 2025 for a participating employer.
54 For educational employers who make election after July 15, 2025, the
55 open period shall begin immediately after such election, and shall not
56 extend beyond October 15, 2025. For the purposes of retirement pursuant

1 to this act, a service retirement application shall be filed with the
2 appropriate retirement system not less than fourteen days prior to the
3 effective date of retirement to become effective, unless a shorter period
4 of time is permitted under law.

5 (i) "Commencement date" means the first day the retirement benefit
6 mandated by this act shall be made available, which shall mean a date or
7 dates on or after the effective date of this act to be determined by the
8 director of state operations for the executive branch of the state, or
9 for any other state employer or any participating employer which elects
10 to participate pursuant to section four of this act, a date on or after
11 the effective date of this act, provided, however, that for an educational
12 employer which elects to participate pursuant to subdivision (d)
13 of this section, the commencement date shall be July 15, 2025 or immediately
14 after election of the retirement incentive for educational
15 employers who elect after July 15, 2025 and provided, further that for
16 participating employers which elect to participate pursuant to section
17 four of this act, except the city of New York and participating employers
18 which are not empowered to act by local law, the commencement date
19 shall be November 1, 2025. The director of state operations shall notify
20 the head of the appropriate retirement system of the date of the open
21 period applicable to employees of the executive branch or of a state
22 employer prior to the commencement date.

23 § 3. (a) A state employer which elects to participate pursuant to
24 section four of this act, a participating employer which is not
25 empowered to act by local law which elects to participate pursuant to
26 section four of this act, or the city of New York, if it elects to
27 participate pursuant to section four of this act shall establish a
28 commencement date for the retirement benefit established under section
29 six of this act in the following manner:

30 (1) for the executive branch, the director of state operations shall
31 establish the commencement date in writing to the appropriate retirement
32 system;

33 (2) for state employers described in paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of
34 subdivision (b) of section two of this act and participating employers
35 that are not empowered to act by local law, its governing body shall
36 adopt a resolution establishing a commencement date;

37 (3) for state employers described in paragraphs 7, 8, 9 and 10 of
38 subdivision (b) of section two of this act, the person or persons who
39 make the election to offer the retirement incentive shall establish a
40 commencement date in writing to the appropriate retirement system; and

41 (4) for the city of New York, the chief executive officer shall issue
42 an executive order establishing the commencement date, provided, however,
43 no executive order, in the case of the city of New York issued
44 pursuant to this section, shall in any manner supersede any local charter.
45 A copy of any such resolution or executive order in the case of
46 the city of New York establishing a commencement date shall be filed
47 with the appropriate retirement system or systems, and, if applicable,
48 on forms provided by such system. The resolution or executive order in
49 the case of the city of New York shall be accompanied by the affidavit
50 of the chief executive officer or other comparable official certifying
51 the commencement date.

52 (b) A state employer, participating employer which is not empowered to
53 act by local law which elects to participate pursuant to section four of
54 this act, or the city of New York if it elects to participate pursuant
55 to section four of this act shall be required to establish a commencement
56 date under subdivision (a) of this section for the retirement bene-

1 fit established under section six of this act. In the event that a state
2 employer, a participating employer which is not empowered to act by
3 local law which elects to participate pursuant to section four of this
4 act, or the city of New York if it elects to participate pursuant to
5 section four of this act fails to establish a commencement date for the
6 retirement benefit established under section six of this act, the
7 commencement date for the eligible employees of a state employer shall
8 be July 15, 2025. The commencement date for the eligible employees of
9 all other employers referenced in this subdivision shall be September 1,
10 2025.

11 § 4. On or before September 1, 2025, a participating employer or a
12 state employer described in paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of subdivision
13 (b) of section two of this act may elect to provide its employees the
14 retirement incentive authorized by this act by:

15 (a) the enactment of a local law; or

16 (b) in the case of a participating employer which is not so empowered
17 to act by local law or a state employer described in paragraphs 2, 3, 4,
18 5 and 6 of subdivision (b) of section two of this act, by the adoption
19 of a resolution of its governing body, provided however, no local law or
20 resolution enacted pursuant to this section shall in any manner super-
21 sede any local charter, provided further, that for an educational
22 employer such election shall be made thirty days after the effective
23 date of this act. For a community college operating under the program
24 of state university of New York, such election shall be made by the
25 board of trustees of such community college subject to the approval of
26 its sponsor. A copy of such law or resolution shall be filed with the
27 appropriate retirement system or systems, and, if applicable, on forms
28 provided by such system. The local law or resolution shall be accompa-
29 nied by the affidavit of the chief executive officer or other comparable
30 official certifying the validity of such local law or resolution. The
31 executive branch of the state shall be deemed to have made an election
32 under this section upon its enactment.

33 § 5. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any eligible employee
34 who has been continuously in the active service of a state employer or
35 of a participating employer from February 1, 2025 to the date immediate-
36 ly prior to the commencement date of the applicable open period, files
37 an application for service retirement that is effective during the open
38 period, and is eligible for a service retirement pursuant to this act
39 because he or she has attained the age of fifty and has at least twenty-
40 five years of creditable service or has attained the age of fifty-
41 five and has at least ten years of creditable service, as of the effec-
42 tive date of the application for retirement shall be entitled to the
43 retirement benefit provided in section six of this act.

44 § 6. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an eligible
45 employee who is a member of a retirement system and who is entitled to a
46 retirement benefit pursuant to section five of this act may retire
47 during the open period without the reduction of his or her retirement
48 benefit that would otherwise be imposed by article 11 or 15 of the
49 retirement and social security law if he or she has attained the age of
50 fifty and has completed at least twenty-five years of creditable service
51 or has attained the age of fifty-five and has completed at least ten
52 years of creditable service. An eligible employee who is covered by the
53 provisions of articles 11 and 15 of the retirement and social security
54 law shall retire under the provisions of articles 11 and 15 of the
55 retirement and social security law.

(b) The director of state operations, the chief executive officer of the city of New York, or chief executive officer or governing board, as appropriate, of the participating employer may deny participation in the retirement benefit provided by subdivision (a) of this section if the director of state operations, the chief executive officer of New York city or the chief executive officer or governing board of the participating employer makes a determination that the employee holds a position that is deemed critical to the maintenance of public health and safety.

(c) The action of the director of state operations, the chief executive officer of the city of New York, or chief executive officer or governing board, as appropriate, of the participating employer in denying the retirement benefit provided for in subdivision (a) of this section to any individual shall be subject to review in the manner provided for in article 78 of the civil practice law and rules. Such action for review pursuant to article 78 of the civil practice law and rules shall only be commenced by the individual that was denied the retirement benefit provided by subdivision (a) of this section.

(d) After making any such determination under subdivision (b) of this section, the director of state operations, the chief executive officer of the city of New York and the chief executive officer or governing board, as appropriate, of the participating employer shall notify the appropriate retirement system or teachers' retirement system of its determination.

§ 7. The pension benefit costs of section six of this act shall be paid by employers as provided by applicable law for each retirement system covered by this act over a period not to exceed five years commencing in the state fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

§ 8. Severability clause. If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part of this act shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part thereof directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment shall have been rendered. It is hereby declared to be the intent of the legislature that this act would have been enacted even if such invalid provisions had not been included herein.

§ 9. This act shall take effect immediately.

FISCAL NOTE.--Pursuant to Legislative Law, Section 50:

This bill would allow employers to elect to provide a retirement incentive. Upon the employer's election, certain members of the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (NYSLERS) will be permitted to retire without regard to early retirement reductions (1) at age 50 with at least 25 years of creditable service, or (2) at age 55 with at least 10 years of creditable service. Currently, members are not permitted to retire before age 55 and are subject to early retirement reductions before attaining normal retirement age.

Insofar as this bill affects the NYSLERS, if this bill is enacted during the 2024 Legislative Session, the additional cost for each member who receives these benefits will vary depending on the member's age, years of service, plan and final average salary.

Extending retirement eligibility to members who have attained age 50 with at least 25 years of service credit is estimated to cost (on average for the group) 200% of the member's final average salary. Eliminating the early age reductions for members retiring after attaining age 55

with at least 10 years of service credit is estimated to cost (on average for the group) 140% of the member's final average salary.

Further, we anticipate significant administrative costs to implement the provisions of this legislation.

The exact number of members who could be affected by this legislation cannot be readily determined. Prior to electing to provide these benefits, an eligible employer would be required to submit a roster of individuals in covered titles to the New York State and Local Retirement System. This roster would be used to develop an exact cost for the individual employer electing to provide the incentive benefits.

Summary of relevant resources:

Membership data as of March 31, 2023 was used in measuring the impact of the proposed change, the same data used in the April 1, 2023 actuarial valuation. Distributions and other statistics can be found in the 2023 Report of the Actuary and the 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report.

The actuarial assumptions and methods used are described in the 2023 Annual Report to the Comptroller on Actuarial Assumptions, and the Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York: Audit and Control.

The Market Assets and GASB Disclosures are found in the March 31, 2023 New York State and Local Retirement System Financial Statements and Supplementary Information.

I am a member of the American Academy of Actuaries and meet the Qualification Standards to render the actuarial opinion contained herein.

This fiscal note does not constitute a legal opinion on the viability of the proposed change nor is it intended to serve as a substitute for the professional judgment of an attorney.

This estimate, dated April 10, 2024, and intended for use only during the 2024 Legislative Session, is Fiscal Note No. 2024-134, prepared by the Actuary for the New York State and Local Retirement System.