

STATE OF NEW YORK

4639

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

February 4, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. PHEFFER AMATO -- read once and referred to the Committee on Governmental Employees

AN ACT in relation to protecting the health insurance benefits of retirees of public employers and contributions of retirees of Medicare-eligible public employers

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

1 Section 1. This act shall be known as the "Health Equity for Retirees
2 Act" or "(HERA)".

3 § 2. 1. On and after the effective date of this act, a public employer
4 shall not diminish the health insurance benefits provided to retirees
5 and their Medicare-eligible dependents or the contributions such employ-
6 er makes for such health insurance coverage below the level of such
7 benefits or contributions made on behalf of such retirees and their
8 dependents by such public employer as of December 31, 2021. Nothing in
9 this subdivision shall be construed to impair the ability of any employ-
10 ee organization to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment for
11 their employee members.

12 2. For the purposes of this act:

13 (a) "diminish" shall mean any change in health care offered that could
14 potentially make it harder for retirees residing anywhere within the
15 United States, including its territories and possessions, to access
16 their health care than before such change was made. These changes shall
17 include, but are not limited to, increasing the cost of such health care
18 (including with respect to premiums, deductibles, coinsurance, and
19 copayments), reducing contributions made by a public employer, forcing
20 retirees into Medicare Advantage Plans, forcing them to use health care
21 providers only from pre-designated panels, or forcing them to wait for
22 pre-authorization for medical procedures that are recommended by their
23 health care providers;

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

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1 (b) "health care benefits" shall mean any and all aspects of health
2 care coverage offered to retirees and their Medicare-eligible dependents
3 by public employers, including, but not limited to: (i) costs: this
4 includes the amount of money (on either an absolute or proportional
5 basis) retirees and their Medicare-eligible dependents are charged for
6 premiums, deductibles, coinsurance, and copayments associated with any
7 health care coverage; (ii) coverage: this encompasses the specific
8 services and benefits covered by the health care plan, including inpa-
9 tient and outpatient care, preventative services, prescription drugs,
10 mental health and substance abuse treatment, and vision and dental care;
11 and (iii) provider choice: this includes the ability of retirees and
12 their Medicare-eligible dependents to access any health care provider
13 who accepts Medicare or participates in the offered plan's network,
14 without restriction;

15 (c) "public employer" shall mean the following: (i) the state or a
16 civil division thereof; (ii) a county, city, town or village; (iii) a
17 school district, board of cooperative educational services, vocational
18 education and extension board or a school district as enumerated in
19 section 1 of chapter 566 of the laws of 1967, as amended; (iv) any
20 governmental entity operating a college or university; (v) a public
21 improvement or special district including police or fire districts; (vi)
22 a public authority, commission or public benefit corporation; or (vii)
23 any other public corporation, agency, instrumentality or unit of govern-
24 ment which exercises governmental power under the laws of this state;
25 and

26 (d) "retiree" shall mean a Medicare-eligible retiree of a public
27 employer.

28 § 3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall be deemed to
29 have been in full force and effect on and after December 31, 2021.