

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR VOICES

Dear Teachers,

As with many areas of education policy, conversations about teacher pensions and retirement benefits are typically held without including teachers. Far too often policies that affect you are done *to* teachers instead of *with* them. And when your interests are considered, it is too often in ways that represent teachers as a single voice, suggesting that all teachers share the same, singular perspective. So, we have purposefully set out on a national effort to better understand the perspectives you as teachers have about your retirement.

Our goal with the National Teacher Retirement Perspective Survey is to cut through the chatter of assumptions about teachers and what they want, and make sure we hear directly from you about what you consider important.

The survey was designed to hear from a nationally representative sample of teacher voices, making sure we had representation from all geographic parts of the country, age groups, levels of experience, and other demographics. We asked your fellow educators for their perspectives on retirement security, levels of satisfaction with the status quo, and input on what is most important when it comes to the value of pension benefits.

There are also disagreements about the importance of pensions to the overall health of the teaching profession, including recruitment and retention of great teachers, so we wanted to make sure the voices of your colleagues were heard on those issues too.

For all of these questions, we were interested to see whether responses from your fellow teachers differed depending on how close they were to retirement. We'd expect that perspectives diverge considerably based on years of experience, whether an individual intends to work a full career in education, or whether someone wants to move across state lines. But to understand how much of a difference there might, we wanted to ask your colleagues directly.

We think it is important that you are empowered with information about your teacher retirement benefits, and some of the potential challenges your pension plan might be facing. We know that most teachers aren't very familiar with pension problems — which means that it is important that we understand what matters to you and how your colleagues might want to play a role in helping to educate fellow teachers about the way pensions as supposed to work.

There were no right or wrong answers in this survey, and we are grateful to the more than 2,400 teachers who took the time to complete it. We hope to work together with you as educators to improve the sustainability of pension



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plans, and to ensure your perspective is well represented in discussions about finding solutions to existing retirement security challenges.

Let's create a safer, more secure retirement for teachers everywhere.

Sincerely,

Anthony Randazzo (Equable Institute  
Executive Director)

and

Sandi Jacobs (EducationCounsel  
Principal and former educator)

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**EQUABLE INSTITUTE**  
27-01 Queens Plaza North, 13th Floor  
Long Island City, NY 11101

[www.equable.org](http://www.equable.org)