

I retired from Harford County Public Schools Payroll Department in June 2017 after 33 years of service. I was called back to the Payroll Department November- 2020 to fill in for a Payroll Specialist out on FMLA. That job ended February 2021.

I was contacted again in February 2022 to come in and assist with the workload while a new person was hired/trained. The new hire resigned June 2022. During this time, I was working in person every day helping to free up the Payroll Specialists to do training. It took until the end of September 2022 for the second new hire to come on board. So the training process began again. A Payroll Specialist isn't fully trained until they have worked a full school year/fiscal year. This resulted in my working more hours than originally planned in person. Eventually, I was afforded the capability to work remotely which cut down on my hours.

The work I am doing is processing the special program pay for school staff working above and beyond the school day to bring the students up to speed from when instruction went virtual. The processing of the special program pay put a hardship on the Payroll Department. The special program pay is a direct result of the pandemic. Most of the funds used to pay the special programs came from the federal government.

This created a problem for me with the State Retirement Agency. When you retire, you sign lots of papers. One of them for the SRA limiting your earnings for the first 5 years after retirement when working for an entity that pays into the SRA system. I did not remember this rule and was not reminded of it until I exceeded my limitations.

I tried to appeal to the SRA to no avail. SRA has exceptions to the rule if I worked in a school or if I was a teacher or administrator. I feel this practice is discriminatory. A lot of rules were bent due to the pandemic. Why not this one?

My penalty is to pay approximately \$14,000 back to the SRA. I could have paid one lump sum but opted for the SRA to adjust my retirement pay over the next year by half to recoup the amount.

I am still working part time for Harford County Public Schools Payroll Department as they are still inundated with special program pay to process and will be beginning training on a new processing system.