

February 10, 2021

The Honorable Richard E. Neal, Chairman
The Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member
Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Neal and Ranking Member Brady,

The Pension Rights Center (PRC), a 45-year-old national consumer organization committed to the protection of retirement security for workers and retirees, is writing to strongly endorse the “Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act of 2021,” which is being marked up this week in the Ways and Means Committee.

The “Butch Lewis Act” relief is long overdue and must be passed now. Even before the pandemic, according to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, there were 124 multiemployer pension plans facing insolvency, endangering the hard-earned benefits of approximately 1.5 million participants and their spouses who face drastic cuts to their benefits.

The pandemic has severely exacerbated this crisis, placing even financially stable plans at increased risk. According to a 2020 report by Segal, “an additional 180 plans could face insolvency over the next 20 years” as a result of the pandemic, bringing the number of plans careening toward failure to over 300, potentially affecting 2.5 million workers, retirees and spouses.” This would devastate families across the country and businesses in their communities that rely on retirees with pension income to buy their goods and services.

As business and shopping areas have gone dark and millions of workers have lost their jobs due to the coronavirus, retirees with pensions that were earned over their lifetime of work continue to use their income to support local businesses, boost tax revenue and reduce the strain that would otherwise fall on community medical and social service resources.

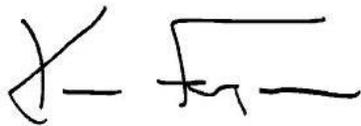
Those most at risk of losing benefits in these multiemployer plans are the very same workers who are risking their lives to protect us during the pandemic. They are the truck drivers who are transporting food and supplies, the nurses and health care workers at the front lines, the grocery store workers who are keeping us fed, the laborers who are building our hospitals, and the musicians who, despite social distancing, continue to comfort the nation by playing online concerts.

These are America’s unsung heroes who do – and did – the essential jobs that we all are depending on in this time of lockdown.

If the multiemployer crisis is not addressed now, the problem will only continue to spiral out of control, putting at risk not only the hard-earned pension benefits of your constituents but the economies of the communities they live in as well. The ultimate cost of delay to the federal government could be significant, while the cost to retirees and their families will be devastating.

We hope all the Ways and Means Committee members vote in favor of this important bill, the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act, which will protect the pension promises of workers and retirees and strengthen communities, businesses and the economy during these times of crisis.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Karen Ferguson, consisting of a stylized 'K' followed by 'Ferguson'.

Karen Ferguson
President

Handwritten signature of Karen Friedman, with 'Karen' written in cursive and 'Friedman' in a more stylized script.

Karen Friedman
Executive Director

cc: All Members, House Ways and Means Committee