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NEW JERSEY SUPERIOR OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

www.NJSOA.org

Thursday, January 17, 2008

Ms. Susanne Culliton
Administrative Practice Officer
Division of Pensions and Benefits
P.O. Box 295
Trenton, NJ 08625

Re: Proposed Amendments: N.J.A.C. 17:9-6.10

Ms Culliton:

The New Jersey Superior Officers Association is the duly authorized bargaining agent for Law Enforcement Officers, employed by the State of New Jersey, and holding the rank of lieutenant and/or its equivalent. All of our members and retirees are members of the State Health Benefits Program.

I am responding to the Commission's proposal to amend statute with regard to the pilot program that was established in January 2000 to provide a retiree prescription drug program for Traditional Plan and NJ PLUS retirees. As noted, the pilot program was effective through March 2005, and subsequently extended to December 31, 2007.

It is my understanding that the current amendment proposal is to make the retiree prescription drug program permanent, and to expand it to all retirees rather than just those retirees in the Traditional Plan and/or NJ PLUS.

It is noted that the State is attempting to eliminate the Traditional Plan and NJ PLUS through implementation of new PPO Plans. However, I don't see where consideration has been given to the groups of employees that have yet to negotiate acceptance of any new PPO Plan. Our Collective Bargaining Unit is currently involved in contract negotiations with the State of New Jersey, and has yet to discuss any such PPO Plan. Until negotiations occur with respect to the details of any new health plan for our members, we cannot agree to eliminate the Traditional Plan and/or NJ PLUS, if even casually.

While we hope that it is the State's intention is to provide all of its retirees with a prescription drug plan, we must still maintain our right to collectively bargain over any elimination and/or change in benefits levels. We are in favor of any plan that would enhance, or make more uniformly available, a retiree prescription drug plan for our members and/or retirees. We are also in favor of amendments that would make the retiree prescription drug program permanent, or that would extend it further. However, we are adamantly opposed to any changes

in statute that would implement change to the health and/or prescription benefits of our members and retirees, without negotiating those changes through the collective bargaining process.

We would welcome any information that would assist us in better understanding the State's intentions, and in negotiating possible changes in our current benefit programs. We would also welcome opportunity to discuss these changes further if any public meetings and/or discussions were to held in reference to these changes.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation in this important matter. I look forward to any comment you may have. Please feel free to contact me, if you have any questions, or if I can provide anything further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeffrey Smith, President

CC: Representatives
Mario Iavicoli, Counsel
file