



Letter from the Chair

Philip Y. Brown

“For all the back and forth, all the difficulties and challenges, the Massachusetts public retirement systems came through 2021 as strong as ever.”

What a year. Oh wait, I said that last year.

While 2020 was a shock to the system, 2021 brought the aftershocks. It was not a complete do-over, but 2021 felt like we were in suspended animation, taking one step forward only to take one step back. Cases got better; then they got worse. Masks came off; masks went back on. Indoor events were ok; then they were not. Life was kind of normal again; life was then anything but normal.

That said, it seemed easier than 2020 because we had all adapted. We made the big necessary changes in 2020. We pulled together. Last year, it was a matter of making adjustments, being flexible and riding out the storm.

For all the back and forth, all the difficulties and challenges, the Massachusetts public retirement systems came through 2021 as strong as ever. Boards earned an astounding composite investment return of 19.5%. While we know there will be highs and there will be lows, it is still an accomplishment to celebrate and reflects on the diligence, dedication, and sound business practices of board members, staff and their investment partners.

At the same time, less flashy but equally important tasks continued to be fulfilled: counseling members, conducting open meetings, issuing pension checks, and a host of other matters that often go unnoticed but are nonetheless vitally essential.

In a similar fashion, the PERAC IT team continued to work behind the scenes to enhance the PROSPER application to help make staff and board members' work more streamlined and interactions with PERAC more convenient. All active board members, over 500 in total, successfully filed their statements of financial interests and did so via PROSPER for the first time. Retirement calculations were another enhancement that brought added value and benefit for all involved.

Many other PERAC units function in a similar manner, not basking in the spotlight, but doing the work that is needed and relied on. They join the retirement boards in their goals of providing quality service, protecting and enhancing system assets, and ensuring fair and equal treatment for all. Whether in person, on the phone, through email or on a video conference, PERAC staff remain committed to serving members, board members and staff, working collaboratively and serving as a resource and a partner.

No one personified that belief more, or believed in the mission of PERAC more, than Jim Machado, who retired as a PERAC Commissioner in early 2022. He was involved in the public retirement system from so many perspectives throughout his 44-year career in public service: as a substitute teacher, a 43-year member of the Fall River Police Department retiring as a Sergeant, as an Executive Board member



and Legislative Director for the Massachusetts Police Association, as a member of the PRIM board, and for 20 years as a PERAC Commissioner. Having worn so many different hats with so many vested interests and varied perspectives, and having been active during pre-PERAC days, Jim's advocacy and support for PERAC carried serious weight. He embraced the vision of uniform standards across systems, equitable treatment for all and robust education. Jim always saw PERAC as part of the solution, not a source of conflict. His passion, intelligence, empathy, and sense of fairness deeply resonated with me and with all who know him. He always stood up for, and never forgot about, the little guy. Thank you for your service and guidance Jim, and even more so, your friendship.

Also departing as a Commissioner was Tim Dooling, who was appointed an administrative law judge for the Department of Industrial Accidents. Tim served for five years as the designee of State Auditor Suzanne Bump. Tim brought varied state government experience to the table, was always prepared, always engaged and ready to ask the tough question. Tim brought perspective and judgment to the Commission (qualities that I'm sure recommended him for the position of an administrative law judge) and we appreciated his thoughtfulness, his good humor and his friendship. We at PERAC appreciate all his contributions.

With their departures, we welcomed as Commissioners Chelsea Police Sergeant and Massachusetts Police Association Executive Board Member Jay Guido and Michael Leung-Tat, Auditor Bump's designee and General Counsel. Both bring important and needed voices to the Commission. We are delighted that they are willing to serve. They are already making significant contributions to PERAC and we look forward to working with them in the years to come.

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Here's to moving forward in all aspects. Continuing to move toward normalcy and our regular lives. Embracing some of the enhancements and innovations borne out of having to adapt. Growing stronger bonds with each other and the members we serve. Building upon the strong foundation of our retirement system.

Thank you to all retirement board members, retirement board staff, PERAC staff, Commissioners, and all members of the Massachusetts public retirement community for your continued dedication and diligence to operate, and advance, a well-run system. ■

Sincerely,

Philip Y. Brown
Chair