

## Public Comments Policy

While the Mississippi Open Meetings Act does not give members of the public the right to be heard at a public meeting, the PERS Board of Trustees may allow reasonable opportunity for members of the public to address the Board with a public comment during PERS board or committee meetings according to the following guidelines:

The public comment should relate to a specific current meeting agenda item or be within the Board's jurisdiction. The Board is unable to entertain requests for public comment on matters that have an existing forum for resolution. Examples of such matters include, but are not limited to, appeals of administrative decisions, disability applications and appeals, PERS personnel matters, pending litigation, and any matters deemed confidential under state law.

Individuals who wish to address the Board must complete a Request to Make Public Comments to the Board, which is provided by PERS on its website along with this written policy. Completion of this request form requires the individual's name, contact information, affiliation, and a brief description of the nature of the individual's public comment. Any request to appear before the Board should be received at least 14 calendar days in advance of the next board and committee meetings. The board chairperson, in consultation with the executive director and staff, will evaluate all requests to determine whether the public comment is appropriate for presentation and in which meeting—the board meeting or an applicable committee meeting—the public comment should be made. PERS will contact individuals prior to the board or applicable committee meeting to inform them as to whether their request was approved. For requests submitted within the 14 days before the board or applicable committee meeting, the board chairperson, in consultation with the executive director, will use his or her discretion to allow these public comments. This decision may be rendered at any time from receipt of the request to the start of the board or applicable committee meeting, so PERS may not be able to give prior notice of approval to these requesters.

If a request is granted, the board chairperson will call upon the individual to speak at the appropriate time during the board or applicable committee meeting. The time allowed for individuals to address the Board will be limited to five minutes per person or group. A spokesperson should be selected to represent a group requesting to address the Board on the same matter. The number of requests granted per meeting may be limited depending upon the number of other agenda items for that meeting.

The Board will listen to all individuals approved for public comment during allotted meeting times but are not required to respond to any public comment. Speakers may not engage in defamatory, derogatory, or abusive remarks while making public comment. The board chairperson has the authority to maintain order at all times and may terminate an individual's privilege to speak if that individual engages in such behavior.