



**MINUTES**

**Claims Panel Meeting  
of the Board of Trustees of the  
State Universities Retirement System  
Monday, August 21, 2023, 8:30 a.m.  
State Universities Retirement System  
Main Conference Room  
1901 Fox Dr., Champaign, IL**

The meeting of the Claims Panel of the Board of Trustees of the State Universities Retirement System (SURS) convened on Monday, August 21, 2023, at 8:30 a.m.

The following Claims Panel members were present: Mr. Daniel Gaumer, Hearing Officer; Ms. Carolyn Clifford, Hearing Officer; Ms. Suzanne Mayer, SURS Executive Director; and Mr. Richard Figueroa, SURS Board of Trustee member (via Zoom).

Others present: Ms. Bianca Green, General Counsel; Mr. Albert Lee, Associate General Counsel; Ms. Heather Kimmons, Associate General Counsel; Ms. Jennifer Bartell, Senior Claims Manager; Ms. Karen Nyi (Zoom) and Ms. Annette Ackerman, Executive Assistants; Ms. Jamie Broom, Member Service Representative (MSR); Ms. Katie Camarano, Member Service Representative; Ms. Becky Jessup, Area Wide Reporting; Ms. Denise Shelton, Medical MSR; Ms. Jessica Kammin, Insurance/Pay Benefits Manager; Mr. Patrick Sullivan of the law firm Featherstun, Gaumer, Stocks, Flynn & Eck LLP; Mr. Kerwin Henderson, Claimant; Ms. Demetria Henderson, witness; Ms. Marilyn Benjamin, (Zoom) Claimant; Dr. Heather Benjamin, (Zoom) witness.

Claims Panel roll call attendance was taken. Hearing Officer Daniel Gaumer, present; Hearing Officer Carolyn Clifford, present; Executive Director Suzanne Mayer, present.

Prior to any business being brought before the committee and after an in-person quorum was established, Hearing Officer Dan Gaumer moved to allow Trustee Richard Figueroa to participate via video or conference call for the Claims Panel Committee meeting on August 21, 2023, pursuant to Section 7(a) of the Open Meetings Act. The motion was seconded by Suzanne Mayer, and it passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Clifford	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye

Attendance of Trustee Richard Figueroa was then confirmed via Zoom.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Gaumer presented the open session minutes from the Claims Panel Hearing of April 4, 2023.

Ms. Mayer made the following motion:

That the open session minutes from the April 4, 2023, Claims Panel Hearing be approved as presented.

Mr. Gaumer seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Clifford	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

Mr. Gaumer presented the closed minutes from the Claims Panel Hearing of April 4, 2023, for approval.

Ms. Mayer made the following motion:

That the closed session minutes from the April 4, 2023, Claims Panel Hearing be approved as presented and remain closed.

Mr. Gaumer seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Clifford	-	abstain
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

**CONTINUATION OF CLAIM – MAHMOOD GHASSEMI**

Mr. Gaumer presented the continuation of the claim for Mahmood Ghassemi by accepting and admitting the post-hearing briefs submitted by the Claimant and SURS that consisted of the admission of pages 417 through 446 of the written record. The post-hearing briefs included the Claimant’s written closing argument, the SURS Staff Response to the same and the Claimant’s Reply to the SURS Staff Response. Dan Gaumer served as the assigned Hearing Officer, and he formally closed the proofs in the case.

### **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – KERWIN HENDERSON**

The claim of Mr. Kerwin Henderson was called for hearing. Mr. Henderson opted to appear in person along with his witness Ms. Demetria Henderson. Mr. Gaumer served as the assigned Hearing Officer and he admitted documentary evidence into the record consisting of 491 pages. The admitted record includes the Claimant's Statement of Claim and the SURS Staff Response to the same. Mr. Albert Lee provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel. Mr. Henderson made several comments related to the summary. Mr. Henderson and Ms. Demetria Henderson were sworn in by the court reporter. The Claimant presented his case. Ms. Jennifer Bartell and Ms. Jamie Broom were then sworn in by the court reporter and were called to testify on behalf of SURS.

Upon the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Dan Gaumer closed the evidentiary proofs.

### **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – MARILYN BENJAMIN**

The claim of Ms. Marilyn Benjamin was called for hearing. Ms. Benjamin and Dr. Heather Benjamin, her witness, opted to appear via video conference. Ms. Clifford served as the assigned Hearing Officer and she admitted documentary evidence into the record consisting of 204 pages, plus four additional pages, 205 through 208. The full record is 208 pages. The admitted record includes the Claimant's Statement of Claim and the SURS Staff Response to the same. Ms. Benjamin and Dr. Benjamin were sworn in by Ms. Jessup, the court reporter. Ms. Heather Kimmons provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel. Dr. Benjamin spoke on behalf of her mother and agreed with the brief summary and added additional comments. Ms. Benjamin presented her case to the panel and Dr. Benjamin provided testimony on behalf of the Claimant. Ms. Bartell was sworn in by Ms. Jessup and was called to testify on behalf of SURS.

Upon the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Carolyn Clifford closed the evidentiary proofs.

### **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – JIMMIE LOCKETT**

The claim of Mr. Jimmie Lockett was called for hearing. Mr. Lockett did not appear. Mr. Gaumer served as the assigned hearing officer, and he acknowledged the original record consisted of 149 pages and admitted additional documentary evidence into the record including pages 150 - 562. The admitted record includes the Claimant's Statement of Claim and the SURS Staff Response to the same. Ms. Bianca Green provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel. Next, Ms. Bartell was sworn in and called to testify on behalf of SURS.

Upon the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Dan Gaumer closed the evidentiary proofs.

**CLAIMS PANEL DELIBERATIONS**

Ms. Mayer made a motion to move into closed session, pursuant to §2(c)(4) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act, to consider the evidence and testimony presented in open session in the cases. Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Clifford	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

Dan Gaumer was only present for the closed session deliberations of the cases assigned to him and Carolyn Clifford was only present for the closed session deliberations for the case assigned to her.

**RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

Upon completion of the closed session deliberations, the Claims Panel returned to open session, at approximately 12:04 pm.

Ms. Mayer then made the following motion for the Ghassemi Claim:

To continue the Ghassemi matter to the next Claims Panel meeting for further deliberations.

Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion, which passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

Ms. Mayer then made the following motion for the Henderson Claim:

To affirm the staff decision, finding that Kerwin Henderson has not proven by preponderance of the evidence that he is entitled to the relief sought, and that a written decision of factual findings and conclusions be drafted by the Hearing Officer and signed by the members of the Claims Panel voting in favor of the motion.

Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion, which passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

Ms. Mayer then made the following motion for the Benjamin Claim:

To affirm the staff decision, finding that Marilyn Benjamin has not proven by preponderance of the evidence that she is entitled to the relief sought, and that a written decision of factual

findings and conclusions be drafted by the Hearing Officer and signed by the members of the Claims Panel voting in favor of the motion.

Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion, which passed via the following roll call vote:

Ms. Clifford	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

Ms. Mayer then made the following motion for the Lockett Claim:

Motion to approve Mr. Lockett's disability claim for the period of February 13, 2021, through July 1, 2022.

Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion, which passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

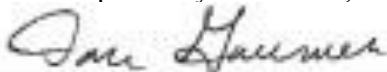
### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

There was no further business for the Claims Panel and no public comment. Trustee Figueroa moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Ms. Mayer and passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Clifford	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

Respectfully submitted,



Daniel L. Gaumer  
Hearing Officer

dlg:aa