



RHODE ISLAND BROTHERHOOD OF CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

"Representing Those Who Work the Toughest Beat in the State"

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7 May 2024

Honorable Members

House Finance Committee

Dear Representative:

I am writing to express the Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers support for **H-7916**, which adds RI Department of Corrections Correctional Officers to the list of public safety employees that are entitled to full salary if they are injured in the performance of their duties.

All aspects of law enforcement are dangerous, but arguably, no one is at greater risk than Correctional Officers. Literally every second of their work day is spent having to "watch their back." In Rhode Island Correctional Officers are sworn peace officers just like our state and municipal law enforcement officers.

The duties of a Correctional Officer can be challenging. The inherent dangers and risks of the duties of a Correctional Officers have been extensively documented. Correctional Officers are the bravest of the brave, dealing not with suspected criminals, but convicted criminals every day. Often one Correctional Officer can be assigned to supervise over 100 inmates. Some of these inmates are serving life sentences for violent crimes and have literally nothing to lose by harming an officer.

Being a Correctional Officer is one of the more dangerous and stressful jobs in the world. Think about what these women and men do every day. They walk through prison gates; the doors are locked **BEHIND** them, and are asked to protect us from the most dangerous criminals in Rhode Island. They are not carrying firearms and are wearing very little protection.

Correctional Officers know the risk and despite that, show up every day for work and protect the public. In turn, the State of Rhode Island needs to provide them with same protections as our counterparts in public safety do.

When a Correctional Officer is assaulted or injured in the performance of their duty they are left to the broken workers compensation system. The workers compensation system in Rhode Island has proven to be inadequate to provide for the needed protection for Correctional Officers and their families. This statute provides injured public safety personnel benefits that are different than provided under the current workers compensation system. This statute recognizes the dangers faced by public safety officers in the performance of their duty.

In Rhode Island, every fire chief, every firefighter, every rescue personnel, the fire marshal, the deputy fire marshal, every Police Officer, every chief of Police and or other members of the police department, any Deputy Sheriff, any member of the fugitive task force, every Capitol Police Officer, every permanent DEM Officer and the Airport Police Officers are provided protection under this statute.

Correctional officers are on the front lines of public safety in Rhode Island. They stand side by side with police and fire to provide safety to the public. Yet the law does not afford them the same protections as police and fire. When you think about public safety, people often fail to consider that Correctional Officers are the last line of defense, and they provide just as much safety to the public as police or fire. Despite this inherent unfairness, Correctional Officers go to work every day to protect the citizens of Rhode Island.

On behalf of the Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers, we are here asking for the same protections granted to virtually everyone else in public safety for Rhode Island Correctional Officers who are injured in performance of their duties.

It is with these facts in mind that the Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers respectfully requests that the committee pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Ferruccio".

Richard Ferruccio, President