



Date: April 22, 2025

Memo To: House Finance Committee Members

From: James A Cenerini, Legislative Affairs/Political Action Coordinator, RI Council 94, AFSCME

RE: H-5530 / S-743 – Restore State Employees' Longevity to the Scope of Collective Bargaining PRO

Rhode Island Council 94, AFSCME, AFL-CIO strongly supports H-5530/S-743, which would allow state employees' unions to negotiate the reinstatement of Longevity benefits.

Background:

Longevity Benefits were derived from the State law, Personnel Rules, and union contracts.

In 2011, the General Assembly passed Budget Article 8, which froze existing state employees' longevity benefits as of June 30, 2011. Longevity Benefits were eliminated for State Employees hired after June 30, 2011. Not only were Longevity Benefits frozen, but they were removed from the scope of Collective Bargaining entirely.

The old Longevity Benefits language in State Employees Master Contract were:

6.5 Each employee shall be granted a longevity increase according to the following formula:

Percentage Increase	
Years of Service	On Base Rate
5	5%
11	10%
15	15%
20	17.5%
25	20%

6.6 Notwithstanding any provision of the collective bargaining agreement to the contrary, an employee's eligibility for longevity stipends, including the amount thereof, shall be governed by the applicable provisions of Article 8 of the FY 2012 Budget (P.L. 2011, ch.151, art 8), as amended.

What does H-5530/S-743 do?

The legislation does not repeal Budget Article 8. Instead, H-7249/ S-2310 restores state employees to negotiate Longevity Benefits in contracts after July 1, 2025.

Longevity Benefits would only resume if contract language was mutually agreed upon by the state and ratified in a new contract. The amounts of Longevity Benefits would be set by negotiations. Since the next State Employees' Master Contract negotiations are not until after June 30, 2027, this legislation costs nothing.

Council 94 also maintains that this legislation as currently drafted would not provide retroactive longevity payments.

The legislation simply restores state employee unions' ability to negotiate Longevity benefits.

Why is H-5530/S-743 necessary?

Due to the COVID pandemic and tight labor market the state has suffered from high vacancy rates and difficulty in hiring critically important positions.

The cumulative trend of reducing retiree medical benefits (2008), multiple rounds of pension reductions (2005-2011), increasing costs of medical benefits, and the elimination of longevity, has made state government jobs less attractive.

The elimination of longevity ensures that some state employees work side by side with other workers who are able to earn 20% more for doing the same jobs.

To safely staff our Court Rooms, Prisons, Veterans' Home, Human Services, Environmental, and Education Agencies, the cycle of continuous benefit reductions must be reversed.

RI Council 94, AFSCME, AFL-CIO urges you to strengthen state services by passing H-5530/S-743.

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