



RHODE ISLAND SUPREME COURT

Office of General Counsel

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April 22, 2025

Via Electronic Mail (HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov)

Chairman Marvin Abney
House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
Room 35
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill # 5737: An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Workers’ Compensation Court

Dear Chairman Abney:

I write on behalf of the Rhode Island Judiciary regarding House Bill # H5737, which is scheduled to be heard and considered this evening before the House Committee on Finance. If enacted, this bill would permit retired Workers’ Compensation Court Judges and their surviving spouse or domestic partner to be eligible for a cost of living allowance (“COLA”) benefit, when the funding ratio of the retirement system reaches seventy-five percent (75%), as opposed to the current eighty percent (80%). The proposed amendment would, with respect to COLAs, place retired Rhode Island Workers’ Compensation Court Judges in a similar position as retired Judges of the Supreme Court, Superior Court, District Court, Family Court, and Traffic Tribunal.

During the 2024 legislative session, multiple amendments were made to the retirement statutes applicable to the COLA benefits of state employees. See § 36-10-35(h)(2)-(3). Several of the amendments made to the retirement statutes applicable to the COLA benefits of state employees were carried through to the judicial retirement statutes in Budget Article 12 SUB A effecting the retired Judges of the Supreme Court, Superior Court, District Court, Family Court and Traffic Tribunal. See § 8-3-15(e)(2)-(3); § 8-8.2-12(e)(2)-(3). However, the amendments made to the retirement statutes applicable to the COLA benefits of state employees were not carried through to the judicial retirement statute for retired Workers’ Compensation Court Judges and their surviving spouses or domestic partners. See § 28-30-18(e)(2)-(3). Hence, the current proposed legislation would place retired Workers’ Compensation Court Judges on similar footing as retired Judges of the Supreme Court, Superior Court, District Court, Family Court and Traffic Tribunal.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation. .

Sincerely,

Chrisanne Wyrzykowski

Chrisanne Wyrzykowski
Deputy General Counsel