

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



Department of Corrections

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The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
House Finance Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

June 4, 2025

Re: H5524 - Relating to Public Officers and Employees - Retirement System- Contributions and Benefits

Dear Chairperson Abney:

This evening the House Finance Committee will consider House Bill #5524. The passage of this legislation will add the positions of Deputy Chief Inspector and Inspector to RIGL § 36-10-9.2 to include these positions in the correctional officer pension schedule. This legislation is essential to ensure retirement benefits of correctional officers are not adversely impacted if hired as an Inspector or Deputy Chief Inspector, which presently necessitates a move from one pension schedule to another.

The discrepancy between the pension schedules assigned to Correctional Officers and Inspectors presents a significant barrier to internal promotion within the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC) and places the Office of Inspections, which is RIDOC's internal affairs unit, at a disadvantage due to a lack of correctional experience on the team. The Office of Inspections is currently comprised of four (4) Inspectors and a Deputy Chief Inspector as well as the Chief Inspector, all of whom are retired from outside law enforcement agencies, with no previous state service and are unlikely to achieve 25 years of service. While Correctional Officers have previously expressed interest in the position of Inspector, which is well-regarded among staff, they are reluctant to seek promotion to this prestigious position if a collateral consequence is the loss of benefits they accrued while working their way up the ranks. If a correctional officer were to accept such a promotion, it could present an administrative nightmare if personnel move in and out of differing retirement systems. For example, the state must move a correctional officer (a member of the correctional officer retirement pension schedule) who accepts a promotion to Inspector into the traditional state retirement system pension schedule. If that Inspector were later be promoted to Chief Inspector, the state will have to move them back into the correctional officer retirement pension schedule. This legislation would not have a retroactive effect.

When the statute (§ 36-10-9.2) was written, the RIDOC was a much smaller department, with a smaller workforce. At that time, only a Chief Inspector was needed to address employee misconduct and/or criminal violations. The Department has grown, and issues of employee misconduct and security have become much more complex. Some issues that did not exist when the statute was written such as computer misuse, cell phone conveyance, and newer kinds of drugs, must now be investigated to ensure that our workforce is professional, law-abiding, accountable for their misconduct, and our facilities safe

and secure. Our four (4) Inspectors do the very same work that was previously performed by the Chief Inspector alone. It is reasonable to assume that the legislature would have included the Inspectors in the retirement statute had the position existed at the time.

Despite the name of the statute "Retirement on service allowance – Correctional Officers", not all the original titles in the statute are members of the Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers (RIBCO) and have always included some titles who are not or never were correctional officers. Furthermore, there are other job titles within the statute that are not within the correctional officer hierarchy: Associate Director, and Classification Counselor. Most of these Associate Director positions have little to no inmate contact, none are in RIBCO, and none of them require graduation from the correctional officer training academy. Therefore, excluding an Inspector from the system simply because an Inspector is not a correctional officer is illogical and inconsistent.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Wayne T. Salisbury Jr." in a cursive script.

Wayne T. Salisbury Jr.
Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee
The Honorable Representative Matthew S. Dawson
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House