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RE: Rule of 90

As your constituent and a dedicated public employee, I urge you to support S 3251 and H 7390, legislation that would establish the “Rule of 90” for members of Rhode Island’s public employee retirement systems.

I am a state employee with over 32 years of dedicated service. I am a 35 hour a week employee who put in between 55-60 hours a week (unpaid) throughout my career with the state. Because we are an agency that is reactive and not proactive everything was an emergency which required working longer hours. I missed out on many family memories during my 32 years. I did this because I truly cared about the department and the children and families we served. I believed that when I put in my years it would be time for me and my family.

I should have been retired already. My husband has significant health problems and I fear that we will not be able to share any retirement life together. I am also responsible for caring for my elderly mother with Alzheimer’s and an adult child with special needs. I am both physically and mentally drained and cannot imagine putting in any more time. You have the power to correct what was wrongly taken from us which will allow me to spend time and care for my family members. This is just my story however there are many more state employees and teachers who are struggling with their own stories. We need to do better for those who committed to public service.

Rhode Island public employees have experienced significant pension reductions over the past decade, particularly following the 2011 pension changes. Today, many teachers, state workers, and municipal employees must work years longer to avoid retirement penalties, even after decades of public service.

S 3251 and H 7390 would provide a fairer and more flexible retirement option by allowing employees to retire at age 60 with 30 or more years of service, without penalty. This proposal builds on the current Rule of 95 framework while recognizing the realities facing long-serving public employees.

This legislation would help restore fairness for workers who have consistently contributed toward their pensions throughout their careers. Many public employees are not covered by Social Security and rely heavily on their pension benefits for retirement security.

The Rule of 90 would provide important flexibility for workers facing health concerns, caregiving responsibilities, or physically and emotionally demanding working conditions.

The proposal would also support recruitment and retention in public education and public service. At a time when Rhode Island faces staffing shortages in schools and public sector positions, providing a more reasonable retirement pathway helps strengthen the workforce for the future.

Your support is critical.

Please support S 3251 and H 7390 and stand with Rhode Island public employees who have dedicated their careers to serving our communities. I appreciate your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Colleen Walters