



**RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS** AFT
AFL - CIO

To: House Finance Committee
 From: Maribeth Calabro, President
 Date: April 16, 2026
 Re: **Rule of 90**
 Testimony in Support of 2026-**H 7390** (Fellela, et. al.)

Maribeth K Calabro

Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Maribeth Calabro, and I currently serve as President of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP) and was formerly the president of the Providence Teachers Union and a proud 30-year educator of differently abled students in Providence public Schools. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of pension improvement legislation, including House Bills 7053, 7160, 7162, 7391, 7500, 7683, 8147, and 7390.

I speak on behalf of thousands of resolute public servants, educators, healthcare workers, and public employees who have devoted their careers to serving the people of Rhode Island. These individuals entered public service with the understanding that, in exchange for their commitment, they would receive a secure and predictable retirement. That understanding was not abstract, it was a promise, reinforced through years of service and consistent contributions to the state’s pension system.

However, that promise was broken.

The pension changes enacted over the past decade have had a profound and lasting budgetary impact on our members, both past and present. Benefits were reduced, retirement timelines extended, and cost-of-living adjustments suspended or diminished. For thousands, these changes upended carefully made retirement plans and imposed significant financial hardship. Members who had structured their lives around a defined set of expectations were forced to absorb sudden and substantial losses.

It is critical to emphasize that these are not theoretical impacts. Our members are living with the consequences every day including delayed retirements, increased financial insecurity, and difficult personal decisions about healthcare, housing, and family support. Most retired people, particularly those on fixed incomes, have seen their purchasing power erode dramatically over time and have been forced to make tough decisions about basic needs for food, clothing, and housing.

The bills before you represent a major step toward restoring fairness and honoring the commitments made to public employees. While no single bill can fully undo the harm that has been done, these proposals collectively move us closer to providing meaningful relief to those who have borne the burden of past policy decisions.

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We urge the Committee to recognize the fundamental issue at stake: trust. We entered into our professions with the belief in the contract that told us we would receive a pension upon retirement, we trusted those in power to fulfill their portion of the pension contribution and they chose not to, the moment this occurred the contract was broken and the trust disintegrated. Our pension is not simply a benefit; it is a contractual obligation and a cornerstone of the public workforce system. When that contract is altered to the detriment of employees and retirees, it undermines confidence not only in retirement security but in public service itself. And quite frankly we cannot afford, as a state or a country, to lose any more public servants as we are at critical mass right now!

Passing these bills would send a clear message that Rhode Island values its public servants, is committed to restoring integrity to its pension system and respects the contract that was violated. You would be acknowledging the sacrifices that have already been made, and you would be taking concrete steps toward alleviating ongoing and future hardships. A meaningful start to build back the trust that was eroded.

We respectfully urge you to support these bills and to continue working toward comprehensive solutions that ensure retirement security for all members of the system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

President, Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP)

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