<u>Testimony for House Bills H7683, 7162, 7391and 7253</u>

Mr. Chairman and fellow committee members. My name is Ray Pouliot, and I live in East Providence. I am the President of NEA Rhode Island Retired and a member of the Rhode Island Public Employees Coalition (RIPERC). I am also an Area Vice President for NEA Rhode Island.

I am offering written testimony on four proposed bills. The first bill is **House Bill 7683**. This bill requests that that there be a base benefit increase in the **Teacher Survivor Benefit** this increases would be reflecting inflation since the last adjustment in 2017 with an "escalator" clause that will automatically increase the base benefit annually, based on the Social Security COLA. As we all know, during the early years of the Biden administration, inflation reached as high as 9.2%. We are looking for a mechanism to keep pace with inflation. Also, it is my understanding that this fund is now over 200% percent funded and is still accepting contributions from active employees. The TSB fund was created to offset teachers in those districts that did not contribute into Social Security. This effects approximately have the teachers in Rhode Island.

In **House Bill 7162** the request is to institute a state income tax waiver on Employees Retirement System of Rhode Island (ERSRI) pensions. This would complement the waiver on military pensions granted by the legislature a few years ago. This is an issue of fairness. Public employees and education employees serve the citizens of this state and make a sacrifice by forgoing increase wages in the private sector. Please consider this request.

In **House Bill 7391** the request would give a one-time full COLA (2.89 %) for post-2012 eligible retirees. This is also an issue of fairness. These retirees were left out of the legislation passed during the last session giving retirees who retired before 2012 when the pension reforms of 2011 took effect. We believe that the post 2022 retirees deserve the same consideration.

The final request is to consider **House Bill 7253.** In 2024, the General Assembly passed a law that changed the way in which an active member in Employees' Retirement System of Rhode Island (ERSRI) pension would be calculated. The highest consecutive average in determining the pension was changed from 5 years to 3 years. In **H7253** we respectively are asking that the same 3-year average be applied to those retirees who retired between 2009 and 2024. This is an issue of fairness and those members' pensions should be recalculated on the three-year highest consecutive average at the time of their retirement and applied prospectively in calculating their pensions.

We ask that you consider the passage of these four bills.

Thank you for your time and if there any questions, please contact me at raymondp70@yahoo.com.

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