

TO: Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee

Support for H8147 – Restoration of Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

I'm writing in support of **H8147** which, with its pending amendment **Sub A**, would restore a 3% annual compounded COLA to the full pension benefit of public retirees.

I retired in 2008 with the state's written promise that I would have the security of a COLA for life. The cost of providing this COLA was included in the mandated 8.75% deduction paid into the pension fund out of each paycheck during my 39+ years as a state employee. In 2011 my retirement security was irrevocably shattered when my COLA was frozen by the ironically named Rhode Island Retirement Security Act.

Since 2011 inflation has risen 45%. When you're elderly and have been living on a fixed income for 14 years, it's hard to budget for the rising cost of necessities. Food prices have doubled, health care, home maintenance & repair prices have all gone up, and this winter the price of home heating oil unexpectedly rose nearly \$2 per gallon (my last delivery was \$5.299/gallon).

It's critical that our pensions keep pace with inflation going forward, because they haven't done so since 2011. While I'm grateful for the partial COLA granted last year to pre-2012 retirees, it's NOT applied to the whole pension, and therefore it won't keep pace with inflation.

With **\$13.2 BILLION dollars** in the pension fund, there's no need to use public funds to reinstate our COLA. The cost of restoring a 3% annual compounded COLA to our entire pension benefit would be less than 1/3 of 1% of the fund.

We're told that change requires patience. That we should trust the process, trust the people in power to eventually do the right thing. We're told to wait for the "right time" or the "right leader" or the "right conditions." HOW LONG do we retirees have to wait, while our financial situation becomes more of a nightmare?

We've waited 14 years. The time is NOW.

Please support **H8147 with its amendment** and forward it to the full house for a vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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