

Members of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Marlene Prichard, and I am a recently retired teacher, having retired in February 2026.

I am writing regarding House Bill 8170 and the current legislation concerning retired teachers and substitute teaching limits. My understanding is that Rhode Island law has allowed retired teachers to exceed the 90-day cap on post-retirement employment for a number of years, and I hope that continues. However, the restriction limiting first-year retirees to 90 days was added only last year. I had originally believed that this first-year restriction would sunset this year, and I am concerned that it remains in effect. ***I respectfully ask that the 90-day substitute teaching cap for first-year retirees be removed, or that first-year retirees working as per diem substitutes be treated the same as other retired educators under the law.***

Before retiring, I worked for approximately six and a half years as a substitute teacher in Barrington. Prior to that, I served for 19 years as a full-time middle school Family and Consumer Sciences teacher. My six-year period between full-time teaching and retirement occurred because the Family and Consumer Sciences program was eliminated from the Barrington curriculum. During that time, I continued working in the district as a substitute teacher rather than in a pension-accruing full-time position. Unfortunately, my area of certification is no longer widely offered in Rhode Island public schools in its traditional form, as many districts have shifted to more specialized Career and Technical Education programs. As a result, I was left without a full-time teaching position.

As a substitute teacher, I worked on a per diem, day-to-day basis in many different subject areas at the high school level and regularly worked nearly every day as needed. In those assignments, I supervised students, monitored lessons left by the classroom teacher, took attendance, and maintained the learning environment. Because I was consistently working outside my certification area, I brought general adult knowledge of the subject matter, but in most cases not the specialized expertise of the regular classroom teacher.

At the same time, I bring more than thirty years of classroom experience and institutional knowledge that is valuable to the district. In addition to my years in Barrington, I also served eleven years part-time in Burrillville, giving me more than thirty years of classroom experience and institutional knowledge in Rhode Island public schools. I understand school routines, student expectations, building culture, and the day-to-day realities of keeping a classroom productive and orderly. Experienced retired educators provide continuity, professionalism, and reliability that greatly benefits students, staff, and administrators.

I understand that the intent of allowing retirees to exceed the 90-day cap may be to address shortages in high-need areas such as special education, mathematics, science, or other hard-to-fill positions where direct content expertise is essential. However, schools also rely heavily on dependable per diem substitutes to keep classrooms functioning each day. When substitute positions go unfilled, regular teaching staff are often required to provide coverages during their planning time or other assigned duties, creating additional strain on school personnel and daily operations. That need exists regardless of whether a retiree is in their first year or later years of retirement.

I also wish to explain why I did not retire when my program was eliminated. Retiring early would have significantly reduced my pension, so I chose to remain in the workforce longer, both for financial reasons and because I still wanted to continue working.

In addition, I am not yet eligible for Medicare and must purchase my own health insurance, which is a significant expense. The ability to earn additional income through substitute teaching would be extremely helpful in meeting those costs.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to reconsider the first-year retiree restriction and allow retired educators who serve as per diem substitutes to work under the same rules as other retirees.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marlene Prichard
Retired Teacher