

April 30, 2026

Good morning,

My name is Diane Feole, and I am an adjunct faculty member of the University of Rhode Island in the Department of Professional and Public Writing. I am writing testimony in support of bill **H-7158** - an act that “would provide that adjunct faculty members at any state college or university who teach at least fifty percent (50%) of the hours regularly worked by full-time faculty in an academic semester would be eligible for the same state hospital care and surgical-medical service benefit as other state employees.”

I have been an adjunct faculty member at URI for the past 22 years. I have taught in both Professional and Public Writing and in Secondary Education departments. In 2023, I was awarded the Teaching Excellence Award for Part-Time Faculty, having been nominated by my department of Writing, a graduate student who I was mentoring, and students. Currently I teach two courses per semester, plus two sections of Talent Development WRT100 every summer, and many summers, a section of asynchronous technical writing, totaling six to seven classes per year. I have dedicated a large part of my career as an educator to the University of Rhode Island, and been paid well to do so. But, I am not covered under any benefits that full-time faculty is afforded. **I write today to ask that all adjunct faculty who teach as much as I do, and who dedicate as much time and energy to the education of young adults in Rhode Island, receive the same medical benefits as other state employees, as that is exactly what we are - state employees, working for the benefit of this state.**

I have also been a teacher in our public schools for the past 32 years. As a high school English teacher, I teach three to four sections of WRT104, concurrent enrollment courses, per year. Finishing my 32nd year as a high school educator, I am eligible for retirement in two and a half years at age 62. When I began my career in public education, I was committed to 30 years of service, and did so gladly, happily, and still, though beyond that 20 years due to retirement system changes, find joy in my work with our young people. At this point in my career, I would like to retire, and commit myself to more work at URI. But, I will not have health insurance at 62, and will have to stay in my current position until at least age 65 if I cannot get health insurance through URI.

I would like to make room for new teachers to enter our incredibly important profession of educating the young people of Rhode Island. I would like to continue to bring my expertise to URI, and not search out other opportunities in nearby Connecticut and Massachusetts. And when I heard of **H-7158**, I had hope that I could do that. If I am afforded the opportunity to enroll in healthcare as a state employee at URI, I could continue to work at URI as an adjunct faculty member beyond my retirement as an educator in the public school. I could even potentially do so at the age of 62, rather than 65 or older, and open up opportunities for new teachers to enter our field. As it stands, legislation is hamstringing teachers to posts beyond their eligible retirement by making life unaffordable beyond retirement age. Open positions are rare, especially in English departments, and we all know how important new blood is to the advancement of ideas and innovations. It is time for the young to enter our profession, and this

bill would empower many of us who teach both public school and at our higher education institutions to hold the door open for those new and excited educators.

So, please understand, as adjunct professors, we work hard. We are professionals. We are skilled. Without us, URI, RIC and CCRI would be void of instructors who both work in academia and the field in which we teach. We are mentors. We are connections to the real world of employment for college students. And we ask for so little to be a part of something greater than ourselves. Please afford us healthcare so we can continue to do so.

Thanks for taking the time to listen to my plea.

With sincerity,

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