



June 2, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney  
Chair, House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7055

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of NEARI, I write in strong support of H 7055, legislation that would restore the ability of state employees to negotiate longevity payments through the collective bargaining process beginning July 1, 2026.

This legislation represents a fair and reasonable recognition of the value that experienced public employees bring to the State of Rhode Island. Longevity pay has historically served as an important tool for recognizing institutional knowledge, rewarding long-term service, and encouraging employee retention across public sector workplaces. The elimination of future longevity increases in 2011 and more than a decade later, it is appropriate to restore the ability of employees and employers to negotiate these provisions at the bargaining table.

Importantly, H 7055 does not mandate longevity payments, nor does it impose a one-size-fits-all statewide compensation structure. Instead, the legislation simply restores collective bargaining rights by allowing longevity to once again become a permissible subject of negotiation between state employers and employee organizations. This respects the collective bargaining process and allows compensation decisions to reflect the unique workforce needs, financial circumstances, and operational realities of individual bargaining units and agencies.

Long-serving public employees provide tremendous value to the state and to the residents they serve. Experienced employees contribute continuity, mentorship, operational efficiency, and deep institutional expertise that cannot easily be replaced. In many state agencies and public institutions, retaining skilled employees has become increasingly difficult as competition for qualified workers continues to grow.

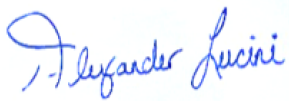
The bill also promotes fairness. Many employees who had previously accrued longevity payments retained those earnings after the 2011 changes, while newer generations of employees have had no opportunity to negotiate similar recognition for long-term service. H 7055 restores balance by allowing future agreements to address longevity prospectively through the normal bargaining process.

Equally important, this legislation acknowledges and reinforces the principle that compensation matters are best resolved through good-faith negotiations between employers and employees

rather than through permanent statutory prohibitions. Collective bargaining provides the appropriate framework for both parties to weigh costs, operational priorities, and workforce needs collaboratively and responsibly.

For these reasons, NEARI respectfully urges passage of H 7055.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alexander Lucini". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Alexander Lucini  
Government Relations Director, NEARI