

Testimony in Support of Rhode Island General Assembly Bill HB7055 / SB2501  
Regarding Longevity Pay for Public Employees

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit this written testimony on behalf of the Community College of Rhode Island Professional Staff Association (CCRI-PSA) in strong support of General Assembly Bill HB7055 / SB2501, which would allow public sector workers to negotiate longevity payments in future contract negotiations in the State of Rhode Island.

I currently serve as the Treasurer for the PSA and, for the past eleven years, proudly work in audiovisual technology where I support CCRI's classroom technology and college events. I offer this testimony from the perspective of public higher education.

CCRI, along with RIC and URI, serve as economic engines, critical drivers of workforce development, economic mobility, and student success across the state. However, to fire on all cylinders, CCRI relies heavily on experienced staff to maintain continuity across critical functions such as Student Services, Information Technology, Administrative Support, Academic Support, Finance, Facilities, and Campus Safety.

Unfortunately, many staff positions face a common challenge: long-term salary growth. With limited advancement opportunities within the existing structures, salary growth quickly plateaus. CCRI staff roles often fall below or at the lower end of public-sector pay bands, particularly in mid-career stages. This is further exacerbated by increasing external competition from the private sector and out-of-state institutions for similar skill sets. Many CCRI staff reach a point where they have mastered their roles and are heavily relied upon for institutional knowledge, yet their career growth and compensation stalls.

Furthermore, CCRI loses highly trained staff at the exact point where they become most valuable to the institution. When experienced staff leave the college, so does institutional knowledge. Staff turnover causes programs and projects to lose continuity, student-facing services become less effective, delays in services and outcomes occur, staff burnout increases and morale wanes. As institutional knowledge drains, the engine slows down, and the college incurs repeated hiring, onboarding, and training costs.

CCRI stands at the intersection of education, workforce development, and economic growth in Rhode Island. To fully realize its mission, it must not only attract talent but retain it. Longevity pay addresses this by five-fold.

1. It serves as a recruitment tool.
2. It reinforces that long-term commitment is valued, improving morale.
3. It reduces costly turnover by maintaining a stable, seasoned workforce.
4. It reduces administrative barriers, errors, and inefficiencies.

5. It strengthens the student experience from admission to graduation.

This is particularly critical for retaining mid- and late-career staff, whose roles are often the most difficult to replace.

CCRI's ability to fulfill its mission depends on the strength and stability of its workforce. Mechanisms such as what is being proposed with the General Assembly Bill HB7055 / SB2501 would allow the PSA, and the like, to negotiate for the fair and competitive compensation that its members deserve. Longevity pay is widely used across public-sector and unionized environments as a complement to cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) and limited promotional pathways. It is a targeted, predictable, and scalable solution.

HB7055 / SB2501 would be a win for CCRI as well. As one of the state's economic engines, when the college can retain talented and experienced staff with institutional knowledge, CCRI is a well-oiled machine.

I respectfully urge consideration of this proposal as part of CCRI's ongoing efforts to enhance its impact and effectiveness. This would be a magnificent investment in CCRI's people, operations, and long-term success.

Thank you for your time and leadership on this important matter. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further.

Sincerely,

John D. Vota  
Treasurer, CCRI Professional Staff Association  
Lead Information Technologist, Community College of Rhode Island