

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

Monday, March 23, 2026

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Community College of Rhode Island Professional Staff Association (CCRI-PSA) in 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 am one of two mental health counselors for CCRI and it has been my privilege to have been at CCRI now for over 15 years. Being at CCRI has been invaluable on a personal level as there is nothing else, I would rather do than to help your students and our Rhode Island community.

Our community college students are often picking themselves up from the ground level and coming to CCRI to start developing and building a dream and future that is really only accessible to them through this path. CCRI is their HOPE! Often, however, that path is fraught with difficulties and challenges that can stop them dead in their track.

There seems to be a trend in business where longevity is not seen as a valuable asset, but in the daily work requirements I can assure you that at CCRI, this is an incredibly important ingredient. College requirements and pathways can be very complicated and intricate not only for our students to navigate but for the staff as well. It is of the utmost importance that students are led into the correct courses and path right from the start as they, as mentioned, cannot afford both financially and personally to run into any complications created by the college. With that need, there is a lot of complex and very interdependent and intricate information for staff to learn and to develop an understanding of contextual

information that the student comes into CCRI with, as well as how and where they hope to go. Sadly, we struggle with staffing turnover due to the salaries compared to that of our sister colleges (CCRI salaries are lower for the same work compared to RIC and URI), the salaries in the private sector, as well as the increase of daily living cost.

New staff, though they often bring great new energy to the teams, take a long time to train correctly, and do lead to an increase in mistakes being made without students. With that, it would be invaluable for our state to recognize the expertise senior and seasoned staff bring to our college and to give them an incentive to continue to stay and to continue to contribute to the great work our college is doing for our Rhode Island population. It would also help the new staff to see CCRI as a long-term professional investment for themselves, instead of a steppingstone to a job somewhere else that meets needs the rising daily costs.

General Assembly Bill HB7055 / SB2501 would allow CCRI to negotiate for the fair and competitive compensation that its knowledgeable staff deserve. With that I respectfully urge the consideration of this proposal as a step in ensuring the continued great and effective works CCRI brings to our state and the value that it holds for our students.

Sincerely,

Sylvain Loize, MA, LMHC

Mental Health Counselor

Personal Counseling and Wellness, Community College of Rhode Island