

9 Feb, 2022

Members of The Finance Committee:

My Name is Alex Ortiz, 37 years old, medically retired Army Veteran. I am in favor of the Governors McKee tax proposal for Military Retirees. There seems to be a common misconception that retired military members are officers and 55+. The reality is that for the past 20 years, military members have been in several wars. I participated in 2 different ones, which contained multiple operations within. I participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. I wasn't an infantryman kicking down doors or a combat engineer looking for bombs on the side of the road. I was a mechanic who often had to carry heavy parts and recover disabled vehicles under the chaos of war. In 2013 I was medically retired at the age of 28, too young to be retired and too broken to work.

Moving back to Puerto Rico was not an option due to the current climate of things going on since 2008 in the Island. I moved to Arizona, where they taxed my income at the federal and state level. My pension was \$1758 for a family of two, and \$96 was taxed a month from my account. My rent was \$950, and my other bills were \$623. \$96 made a big difference. I couldn't work for more money, and it took many years for me to recover and heal. I now find myself in Rhode Island attending Rhode Island College, where it has been the best education I have ever received. I want others to share my sentiment towards Rhode Island and bring their leadership and devotion to the state. Phasing out tax on Military retirement is a step in the right direction to bring more members to our great state. Over 60% of retirees are enlisted members, with the average grade of retirement being an E-6. Please support your veterans by allowing them to keep their retirement in full and help them combat the current inflation.



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The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chairman, House Committee on Finance
Virtual Meeting via WebEx, Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

The East Providence Area Chamber of Commerce supports Article 8 - Small Business Budget in Governor McKee's FY2023 Budget; notably the following:

- Cottage food licensing
- Reform corporate minimum tax
- Reduce interest rates for delinquent taxes
- Taxpayer steward
- Reform tangible tax
- Alcohol to go
- Small business development fund

The small business community has suffered much financial loss during the last two years of the pandemic. The Governor's proactive support in creating a small business line item for them is appreciated. It was needed prior to the pandemic and more so now.

Your support of Article 8 would send a strong message to Rhode Island businesses, and to potential businesses looking to invest in the State, that they are valued. The City of East Providence has a \$5,000 personal property tax exemption that our chamber advocated for a few years ago. It created a sense of good will with our small businesses as well as the financial savings. Most do not have to pay this tax. Imagine what it would do for other communities in the state! For too long, Rhode Island's business climate has been consistently at or near the bottom of every national "best of" survey and report. This is the opportunity that will help to move the state up the lists.

Thank you for your attention and support of this important budget item that will benefit so many.

Sincerely,

Laura A. McNamara, executive director