



State of Rhode Island
Office of the General Treasurer

James A. Diosa
General Treasurer

25 February 2025

The Honorable Susan Donovan
Chair, House Committee on Health and Human Services

The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: *Concerning 2025-H 5175, An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Notification of Fire Fighters, Police Officers and Emergency Medical Technicians After Exposure to Infectious Diseases*

Chair Donovan:

I write with regard to 2025-H 5175, which purports to extend occupational disability benefits for first responders exposed to infectious diseases to COVID-19 related illness. As drafted, it is unclear whether this legislation intends to extend certain pension benefits to first responders in municipalities that are not within the Municipal Employees' Retirement System ("MERS"). By its language, this bill would entitle fire fighters, police officers and emergency medical technicians to "all of the benefits provided for in chapters 19, 21 and 21.5 of title 45, as applicable." Those provisions – among other things – provide disability and pension benefits to municipal employees and municipal first responders within the MERS system.

In its present form, however, it is unclear whether those entitled to pension related benefits would be *only* those subject to the jurisdiction of the state retirement board or would extend additional benefits to members of independently managed retirement systems. The Office of the General Treasurer would therefore recommend adding language to clarify that ambiguity.

Absent amendment, this bill may have an impact on the pension system, necessitating a pension impact study pursuant to R.I. Gen. Law § 45-21-42.2 (Legislation impacting the pension system "shall *not* be approved by the general assembly unless an explanatory statement or note . . . is appended to the proposed legislation which actuarially calculates . . . the projected twenty (20) year cost of the proposed legislation") (emphasis added).

Please feel free to reach out by email at Robert.CravenJr@treasury.ri.gov or by phone at (401) 330-0661 with any further questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Craven, Jr.', with a stylized, cursive script.

Robert E. Craven, Jr.
Director of Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs
Office of the General Treasurer

cc: The Honorable John Edwards