



Bristol Police Department

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KEVIN M. LYNCH
Chief of Police

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Representative Stephen M. Casey, Chair
House Committee on Municipal Government & Housing
Room 101 - State House

RE: H 7660

Chair Casey,

The policing profession has seen a drastic (critical) decline in candidates seeking a career in the field of policing and for that matter public safety.

We are reaching a critical status in recruiting new police officers. The realistic answer is that our younger populace are simply NOT interested in working nights, holidays, weekends and addressing the vast challenges to include public scrutiny with modern policing.

Notably, we recall a news article (April 2021) when then Colonel James Manni of the Rhode Island State Police testified in the general assembly that policing was on the “verge of personnel crisis” – that crisis is upon on us now as we seek creative solutions to address this issue. The RIPCA has worked feverishly to address recruiting with a new testing procedure with a local vendor that meets our local charters, ordinances, and codes to lean the current processes. Notably, this streamlined process doesn’t address the shortages of candidates and personnel seeking a public safety career.

This legislative provision allows us to offer obtainable pension benefits with a very small financial impact to an aging workforce and recruit middle-aged people for a career in police and fire services. Moreover, this address the concern(s) of allowing people who have chosen this profession later in life or a so-called second profession to enter the field as a mature person now suited for the challenges of public safety and meet their pension guidelines.

This act would offer the ***option to eliminate the up to the 38% penalty imposed on the retirement allowance for police and fire fighters*** who seek retirement after 20 years of dedicated service by providing an option for members who obtain age 57 after 20 years of service to provide parity with the municipal pension plans for police officers and fire fighters ***with no significant financial impact to the system.*** In some cases, and aging workforce simply can’t reach 25 years of service to meet the minimum threshold to obtain a pension without a penalty.

Working Group Notes: The Pension Working Group considered testimony opining that this disparity has made it difficult for municipalities in MERS to retain employees lured by more attractive retirement provisions in neighboring jurisdictions.

This option was proposed alongside an option, discussed infra, which would permit members of MERS police and fire units to retire at age 57 or over with at least 20 years of service.

This option would permit members of MERS police and fire units to retire at age 57 or over with at least 20 years of service. Given current retirement provisions, this would impact a comparatively limited group of public safety professionals. Effectively, it would impact firefighters and police officers older than 57 but younger than 66 with over 20 years of service but less than 25 years of service that intend to retire before their twenty-fifth year of service. The impact associated with this option is thus limited.

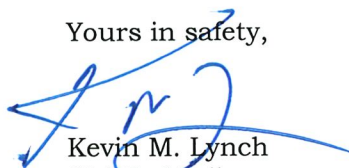
The following table describes costs attributable to this option for FY25 and after:

	MERS POLICE AND FIRE UNITS
Normal Cost	0.17%
UAAL	\$5 million
Funded Ratio	-0.4%
Projected FY25 Contribution	
Percent of Payroll	0.42%
Est. Annual Dollar Amount	\$0.6 million

See pages 34 & 36 of Pension Advisory Working Group Report - [Final Report of the Rhode Island Pension Advisory Working Group As Approved 2.26.2024_1.pdf \(ri.gov\)](#)

Final Note – Chief Kevin M. Lynch: The actuarial study depicted in the working group notes listed above utilizes inflated data and assumes that *every eligible person* (police & fire) over the age of 57 with 20 years of service or more would retire upon passage of this legislation – the chiefs association feels that this assertion is woefully incorrect and the financial impact of this minor legislative impacting less than 100 personnel both Police and Fire **will be de minimis**. Lastly, with advanced age and the physical and mental challenges associated with public safety positions this provision could save the system financially by drastically reducing the cost of disability pensions that may be impactful with an aging workforce in a challenging field like public safety.

Yours in safety,



Kevin M. Lynch
Chief of Police
Past-President – Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association

