



State of Rhode Island
Office of the General Treasurer

James A. Diossa
General Treasurer

29 January 2026

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 2026-H 7186, 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 2026-H 7186, which purports to extend occupational disability benefits under Title 23 for first responders exposed to infectious diseases to include COVID-19 related illness. In its current form, this bill may have an impact on the pension system, necessitating a pension impact study pursuant to R.I. Gen. Law §§ 36-10-39 and 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”). Treasury recommends the proposed change to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-28.36-4 be amended to clarify that the inclusion of COVID-19 as a basis for an occupational disability benefit under Title 23 would not create automatic eligibility – or a causal presumption that illness arose out of or in the course of employment – for an accidental disability benefit under Titles 45 or 36. *See Clancy v. Retirement Bd.*, 2003 WL 21018392, at *5 (R.I. Super., Apr. 16, 2003) (finding occupational disability benefits under R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-28.36-4 separate and distinct from accidental disability benefits provided under R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-21.2-9).

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,

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

cc: The Honorable John Edwards