



May 14, 2026

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma
Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: S 2027

On behalf of the National Education Association of Rhode Island and our 12,000 members, I write in strong support of S 2027, legislation that would increase the allowable post-retirement earnings cap for retired teachers who serve as certified driver education instructors from fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000), without any reduction in their retirement benefits.

This bill represents a thoughtful and necessary step toward ensuring parity and fairness within the post-retirement employment provisions of Rhode Island law. Currently, retired educators who return to provide part-time classroom instruction, academic advising, or coaching are permitted to earn up to \$25,000 annually without penalty. S 2027 simply extends that same standard to retired teachers who provide driver education instruction, recognizing that their contributions are equally valuable and deserving of consistent treatment under the law.

Driver education plays a critical role in promoting public safety and preparing young people to become responsible, informed drivers. High-quality instruction in this area has a direct impact on reducing accidents, improving decision-making behind the wheel, and fostering lifelong safe driving habits. Ensuring that school districts and state programs can continue to access experienced, highly qualified instructors is essential to maintaining these outcomes.

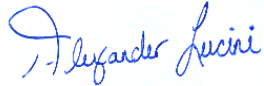
Many of the individuals who provide driver education instruction are retired educators who bring decades of classroom experience, student engagement skills, and professional expertise. Their ability to connect with students, manage instruction effectively, and reinforce important safety principles is rooted in a lifetime of service in education. However, the current lower earnings cap creates an unnecessary barrier that may discourage these skilled professionals from continuing to contribute in this capacity.

Importantly, S 2027 also provides clarity and consistency in statute by incorporating driver education into the same framework as other recognized forms of part-time post-retirement educational service. This approach helps avoid the need for future piecemeal statutory adjustments and ensures that driver education remains appropriately categorized alongside comparable instructional roles.

This legislation does not expand benefits or create new entitlements; it simply modernizes existing law to reflect current realities and promote fairness across similarly situated roles. It supports workforce flexibility, enhances program quality, and acknowledges the value of experienced educators who continue to serve Rhode Island students beyond retirement.

For these reasons, NEARI strongly urges passage of S 2027.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alexander Lucini". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue rectangular background.

Alexander Lucini
Government Relations Director, NEARI