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May 14, 2026

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

RE: *Support for S-2089: An Act Relating to Public Officers and Employees – Retirement System Contributions and Benefits*

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the 80,000 union members of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO and our affiliated local unions, I write in support of Senate Bill 2089 introduced by Chairman Bissaillon. This bill makes a simple change to the existing law allowing retired teachers and state employees to be paid the stipend they earn for serving as a member of the State Labor Relations Board.

Up until this year, retired teachers in particular who served on the State Labor Relations Board (SLRB) were paid their stipend, with no impact on their state pension benefits. This year, following a review performed by the auditor general, the office interpreted the current law differently. They determined that a retired teacher cannot accept the stipend without penalty to their retirement benefits.

Following this determination, the office considered the stipend salary despite it not providing for any additional pension payments or credits and board members do not receive health insurance. This decision only applies to retirees of the state pension system which means only a certain class of workers, namely retired teachers, will likely be precluded from serving on the SLRB.

If a retired teacher were an elected official, such as a state senator, they would be able to collect their pay without penalty. The members of the SLRB who are appointed by the Governor and approved through the advice and consent of the Senate, should be no different. This legislation ensures that parity.

For these reasons, the Rhode Island AFL-CIO urges the committee to support Senate Bill 2089. Thank you for your time and consideration, along with the opportunity to provide written testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 401-751-7100 should you have any questions or require any additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

Erica A. Hammond
 Legislative Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO

