



Adjunct Faculty Medical Insurance

2026 S 2454 (Sen. Burke) and H 7158 (Rep. Hull)

What the bills do

- State law defines which state workers are eligible for medical insurance coverage. Employees of the State who work twenty (20) or more hours per week are eligible for medical benefits.
- The definition of employee in §36-12-1 for purposes of medical benefits excludes “Part-time personnel whose work week is less than twenty (20) hours a week and limited period and seasonal personnel.”
- These bills supplement the definition of employee in §36-12-1 to include higher education faculty. Adjunct faculty status and compensation are based on credit course load for each class, not hours worked per week.
- Adjunct faculty eligible for medical benefits would be defined by these bills as those who work fifty percent (50%) or more of the regular full time faculty load hours.
- The bills affect all three public higher education institutions.

Background

- The RIFTHP organized adjunct faculty at Rhode Island College on May 2, 2007.
- The adjuncts at the University of Rhode Island first organized in 2007 and have been represented by AFSCME Council 94 since 2021.
- The NEA/RI organized adjunct faculty at CCRI in 2014.
- In order to be in the adjunct bargaining unit, faculty must teach at least 6 credit hours in a two-year period.
- The normal workload of a regular faculty member at Rhode Island College is 12 credit hours per semester.

Why these bills are needed

Adjunct faculty are employees. While some adjunct faculty supplement existing jobs with teaching a course at RIC, others make a living by teaching at RIC and other higher education institutions. Many adjunct faculty are long term employees. All four founding officers of the RIC Adjunct Faculty Union had taught at least 20 years at RIC.

Fifty percent of course load is comparable to 20 hours. Current law permits those state employees working 20 hours or more to get medical insurance. 20 hours is about half of the standard workweek of a state worker. This bill uses the same threshold for adjunct faculty, expressing service as a percent of faculty load hours of courses taught instead of expressing service as hours worked per week.

Adjunct work is more than time in a classroom. Faculty work involves more than teaching. It involves considerable time in classroom preparation and research to remain current in the field. Adjunct faculty participate in committee work at the college and hold office hours to be accessible to students.

Adjunct faculty treated as second class citizens. The failure of Rhode Island public higher education institutions to offer medical insurance benefits to adjunct faculty is disrespectful. Half-time workers anywhere else in state government are able to get medical insurance benefits but half-time adjunct faculty are not.

Cost-Sharing determined in policy or collective bargaining. Current state worker collective bargaining agreements determine employee cost-sharing for full-time and part-time employees. Most state contracts require cost-sharing based on salary, ranging from 15% to 25% cost-share. State policy governs cost-sharing for employees who are not under collective bargaining agreements

Many Adjunct Faculty Do Not Need State Benefits. Many adjunct faculty are retirees or otherwise have full-time employment with benefits. All adjunct faculty will not get benefits if offered medical insurance through the state.