

To: Senate Finance Committee
From: Jeremy Sencer, RIFTHP Field Representative
Date: May 26, 2026
Re: Adjunct Faculty Healthcare Access
Testimony in **Support of S 2454** (Burke, et al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of S 2454, legislation that addresses inequitable access to healthcare by extending state employee health benefits to adjunct faculty who carry substantial teaching loads.

Under current Rhode Island law, state employees working twenty (20) or more hours per week are eligible for employer-sponsored healthcare benefits. However, adjunct faculty are excluded because their work is measured by course load rather than weekly hours worked, creating inequity where educators performing work comparable to at least half-time employment are denied benefits available to other state employees.

S 2454 corrects this inequity by establishing eligibility based on teaching at least fifty percent (50%) of a full-time course load, reflecting the same threshold used elsewhere in state employment for healthcare coverage.

At Rhode Island College, where RIFTHP represents adjunct faculty, a typical full-time teaching load is twelve credit hours per semester. Adjunct faculty teaching half that load perform substantial instructional work extending beyond classroom hours, including preparation, grading, advising, office hours, committee work, and maintaining expertise in their fields.

Many adjunct faculty are long-serving educators who have spent years, and sometimes decades, teaching Rhode Island students. Yet while half-time workers elsewhere in state government can access healthcare benefits, half-time adjunct faculty cannot. S 2454 addresses that inequity.

Expanding eligibility also does not mean all adjunct faculty would enroll in state health plans. Many maintain benefits through retirement or other employment, making the potential fiscal impact more limited while improving workforce stability, retention, and equity.

Adjunct faculty are employees. They educate Rhode Island students and support public higher education institutions. Educators performing substantial instructional work should not be excluded from basic healthcare protections simply because their workload is measured differently.

For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support S 2454.