

To: Members of Senate Finance Committee  
May 14, 2026  
RE: SB 3251- The Rule of 90 & SB 2842 - The Rule of 85

My name is Kerri Sloat. I am an educator in the Bristol Warren Regional School District. I have 33 years of service and 31 years vested in the RI retirement system. I write this letter in support of any bill that aims to meaningfully improve the retirement security of educators and state workers. Specifically bills that lower the age of eligibility and reinstates a meaningful cost-of-living adjustment (COLA).

For more than a decade, educators have waited for reforms to counteract the damaging effects of the RI Retirement Security Act of 2011(RIRSA) In 2023 & 2024, The Pension Advisory Working Group (PAWG) assessed the impact of RIRSA. This group met 6 times and heard countless hours of testimony. Their final report outlined recommendations; yet here we are in 2026 with not one bill approved. Essentially RIRSA created a system that negatively impacted workers and pushed educators to leave Rhode Island. It is well known that our neighboring states, Massachusetts and Connecticut, provide pensions that are more favorable. Essentially we are losing our best and brightest to states that offer stronger retirement incentives.

While lowering the retirement age from 62 to 60, with 30 years of service, is a step in the right direction. It should be noted that many educators with 30 years of service are still not eligible to retire. A realistic look at SB 3251 shows the youngest beneficiary started teaching at age 30. Their retirement age is 60, with 30 years of service totaling 90. This does not reflect the typical career path of most educators who begin teaching in their twenties. In practice, SB 3251 primarily affects individuals who started in another profession, paid into Social Security, and later transitioned to teaching. It does not address those who started teaching early and devoted many years to the pension system. Despite this bill flaw, RI educators are still in favor of reducing the age of eligibility from 62 to 60.

Also of importance, note that current teachers are working far longer than thirty years and receiving pensions that hover around 40%. This is unacceptable for any teacher who was ALREADY vested before 2012. For 17 years of my career I contributed and saved with the understanding I would retire with a minimum of 65%. Instead I will retire at 62 with approximately 48%. My district does not pay into social security, my TIAA account states a lifetime payout under \$300 a month. I will have no health care until 65. I have gained nothing in my three decades of teaching! Instead, I will probably either work through retirement or have to sell my home. I am currently working three jobs in an effort to make up for the lost saving years stolen from me. Is this how we treat teachers in the state of RI?

Lastly, I offer a note on the broader fiscal picture. The former pension system allowed retirement based on years of service rather than age of eligibility alone. The current system pays higher teacher salaries for longer...much longer. In Bristol/Warren over 80% of the teachers are on top step. The towns carry the burden of these top salaries, while also

contributing percentages to our pension. Essentially, the state has shifted much of the financial responsibility to local communities, and that dynamic is unsustainable.

Rhode Island cannot afford to continue balancing its retirement system on the backs of its teachers and state workers. We cannot expect the towns to carry such financial burdens, when trying to balance their budgets. It is time to support your educators. To implement bills that strengthen the profession, and improve the state's and town's ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. This committee's leadership is vital in addressing injustices and implementing change.

Sincerely,  
Kerri Sloat  
Educator, Bristol Warren Regional School District