

May 13, 2026

Dear Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

As a lifelong Rhode Islander and dedicated public educator, I respectfully urge you to support S3251, legislation establishing the "Rule of 90" for members of Rhode Island's public employee retirement system.

Over the past fifteen years, Rhode Island public employees have endured significant reductions to their retirement benefits, particularly following the sweeping 2011 pension reforms. As a result, many teachers, state employees, and municipal workers are now required to work substantially longer in order to avoid severe retirement penalties, even after dedicating decades of service to their communities.

My own experience reflects the challenges faced by many public employees across the state. Although I have taught in Rhode Island for 28 years, my career began in a part-time position. Consequently, I lost valuable years of credited service toward retirement, which will ultimately require me to work a significant amount of additional years before I can retire without financial penalty. Like many educators, I entered public service with the understanding that years of dedication and contribution would lead to a secure and dignified retirement. Instead, the extensive reforms enacted over the years have made that goal increasingly difficult to achieve. For many of us who have devoted our lives to public service, the current retirement requirements now seem unattainable.

S3251 would establish a more equitable and flexible retirement pathway by allowing employees to retire at age 60 with at least 30 years of service without penalty. For workers like me, who have dedicated decades to serving Rhode Island's children and communities, the Rule of 90 would provide a realistic and dignified path to retirement while appropriately recognizing years of service and consistent pension contributions.

In addition to supporting current employees, this legislation would strengthen recruitment and retention across public education and public service at a time when Rhode Island is facing critical workforce shortages, particularly among educators. As staffing challenges continue to affect schools, state agencies, and municipal departments, establishing a more equitable and attainable retirement pathway would allow long-serving employees to retire within a far more reasonable amount of time while also creating opportunities to attract, support, and retain the next generation of professionals dedicated to public service.

At a time when the state's fiscal outlook is improving, Rhode Island can responsibly invest in retirement security for the public employees who are essential to the operation of our schools and communities. By supporting this legislation, you would demonstrate that Rhode Island values the enduring lifelong contributions and public service of educators, state employees, and municipal workers who serve our communities every day. Your support is crucial.

I respectfully ask that you support S3251 and stand with the educators, state employees, and municipal workers who have devoted their careers to serving the people of Rhode Island.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Egan