



Director's Office

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March 11, 2026

The Honorable Walter S. Felag, Jr.
Chairperson
Senate Committee on Special Legislation & Veterans' Affairs
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Senate Bill 2753– An Act Relating To Military Affairs And Defense – Rhode Island Veterans Home Staffing Support Act Of 2026

Dear Chairperson Felag,

Thank you for providing the Division of Human Resources (“Division”) within the Department of Administration (“Department”) the opportunity to submit our concerns in response to Senate Bill No. 2753, which would create The Rhode Island Veterans Home Staffing Support Act of 2026, directing the Department to conduct a comprehensive workforce analysis of the Veterans Home in consultation with the Department of Health, the Office of Veterans Services, and the Administrator of the Rhode Island Veterans Home. The Division appreciates the bill’s intent to support the Veteran Home workforce, but has a multitude of concerns regarding the administrability of the legislation.

First, the legislation requires the Department to act as the coordinating agency in conducting a comprehensive workforce analysis of the Veterans Home, inclusive of wage competitiveness for “all classifications relative to comparable long-term care facilities statewide and in neighboring states.” Job classifications are not tied to specific agencies or divisions, but rather are used across State government based on needed job function and fit. As such, any amendment of a job classification may not only impact the Veterans Home staff, but also those employed in the same classification at other agencies, such as the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH). For these reasons, the State utilizes the statutorily mandated public hearing process, which already exists as a vehicle for changing a classification’s compensation structure. A classification change is only proposed after a full vetting that considers budgetary impacts to the proposing agency and other agencies that use the classification, as well as comparison data from the public and private sector where feasible.

Second, the legislation also does not have a process that considers wage compression impacts to other agencies that share classifications with the Veterans Home. This could result in unintended consequences, such as subordinates being paid more than supervisors in a different agency or reducing vacancies at the Veterans Home while creating a retention problem at another agency due to parity issues.

In addition, the deadlines for the workforce analysis and corrective action plans are not achievable. Agencies take months to put together thoughtful job classification proposals for the public hearing process, as well as proposed agency budgets and run them through a full vetting process. A corrective action plan in particular could have a large, complex budgetary impact that would require time and careful planning beyond a 45-day deadline. The deadline feasibility is further impacted by the fact that some of the information mandated in the workforce analysis, such as shift differentials and scheduling

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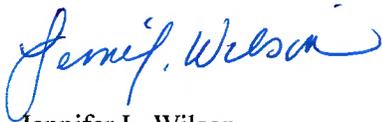
flexibility, may not be centrally tracked or readily available (some private sector information, for example, may be difficult to solicit).

It is important to note that the November 15, 2026 deadline for updated classifications could put the State budget out of balance for at least six months if classifications are upgraded without sufficient funding in the enacted budget. Once classifications are updated, they become effective immediately under state law.

Finally, mandating a corrective action plan in this legislation assumes a specific outcome of the analysis before it is completed. From a process standpoint, the Department (in conjunction with its partner agencies) would need to conduct an analysis to determine whether a specific problem exists, the level of impact and its cause. Mandating that the Department implement the classification and pay-grade recommendations without consideration for budget impact, wage compression issues and impacts to other agencies could present enormous complications and negates the intent of the mandatory public hearing process under the Merit Act. If the outcome is already determined, the process for public input becomes a moot point. If the outcome cannot be subject to public feedback like all other classification changes, it also sets a precedent for lack of transparency.

The Division appreciates the opportunity to share our concerns over this legislation with the Committee. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact my office at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Jennifer L. Wilson
Executive Director
Division of Human Resources

cc: The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Special Legislation & Veterans' Affairs
The Honorable Linda L. Ujifusa
Kristen Silvia, Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Legislation
Alexandra Malloy, Committee Clerk