



State of Rhode Island
Office of the General Treasurer

James A. Diossa
General Treasurer

25 April 2024

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance

The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance

RE: *2024-H 7341 – An Act Relating to Public Officers and Employees – Retirement System Contributions and Benefits*

Chair Abney:

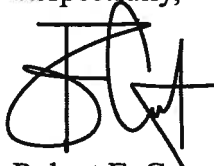
I write with regard to 2024-H 7341. Though the overwhelming majority of Rhode Island's public safety professionals are in MERS police and fire plans or locally administered police and fire plans, there is a small group of public safety professionals in the Employees' Retirement System of Rhode Island ("ERSRI"). Because these professionals are in ERSRI – rather than a public safety plan – they receive the same benefits as those in the state system, including the same retirement age and benefit accrual. This includes approximately 380 law enforcement officers (such as sheriffs, capitol police officers, and environmental police officers), firefighters and crash rescue at Quonset Airport, and juvenile program workers.

This bill would help create benefit parity between this class of individuals and police and fire units in the Municipal Employees' Retirement System, given the physical and mental stresses often associated with both types of jobs. Primarily, this would impact service accrual, retirement age, and annual benefit. As such, this bill is likely to have an impact on the state's pension system.

Consistent with Rhode Island law, legislation concerning the pension system should not be approved without the benefit of a pension impact note. *See* R.I. Gen. Law § 36-10-39 (Legislation impacting the pension system "shall *not* be approved by the general assembly unless an explanatory statement or note . . . is appended to the proposed legislation which actuarially calculates . . . the projected twenty (20) year cost of the proposed legislation") (emphasis added). This independent assessment will clarify any impact the proposed legislation may have on both the State budget, and the sustainability of the pension system. The Chairperson of the House Finance Committee – with the approval of the Speaker of the House – can request a pension impact note concerning proposed legislation originating in the House. *See* R.I. Gen. Law § 36-10-39.

Please feel free to reach out by email at Robert.CravenJr@treasury.ri.gov or by phone at (401) 330-0661 with any further questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Craven, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

Robert E. Craven, Jr.
Director of Legislative Affairs
Office of the General Treasurer

cc: The Honorable William O'Brien