

May 6, 2024

To whom it may concern,

My name is Vanessa Dyer. I am a library media teacher in the Portsmouth School District in Portsmouth, RI. I live at 33 Charlotte Dr. in Bristol, RI. I am writing to support amending HB 8149 to include teachers along with public officers and employees, and upon enacting the amendment, I am in support of HB 8149.

I have been a public school teacher for almost six years, so while I am an experienced teacher, I am still fairly new to the profession. While I love my chosen profession, fostering a love of reading in an elementary school, I am not unaware of the issues facing the teaching profession. Teacher retention is an issue that public education is facing on a national level, and we are not immune to that in Rhode Island. My colleagues and I are dedicated to educating RI's youth, but it is a challenging job.

The state of our pensions is a concern for not only me, but for my colleagues as well. Some educators would not benefit from leaving education now to seek out careers with 401Ks, but our less tenured educators have a lot to consider. House Bill 8149, if amended to include teachers, would see the average teacher's pension increasing by an additional \$1,024. Any improvement to teachers' pensions is an incentive for educators to stay in the teaching profession.

I see how hard my colleagues work every day. I see our newer teachers embracing the profession with tenacity, excitement and innovation that is invaluable to our students' education. We all deserve a secure retirement for the work we do to build our communities' future. Changing the pension benefit calculation from averaging the five highest consecutive years of earnings to three years, as House Bill 8149 does, has a meaningful impact for all active educators in the pension system regardless of their date of hire. Not only does this help our veteran teachers, but it could also help retain our newer teachers. All of our teachers would benefit from being included in House Bill 8149.

Thank you for your consideration,

Vanessa Dyer

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