

March 12, 2025

Dear House Finance Committee Education Subcommittee Members,

My name is Kerri Friel, I live in District 19 in Warwick, Rhode Island, and I have been a faculty member in the Dental Health Department at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) for 25 years. I'm also a member of NEARI.

My colleagues and I love what we do—providing a high-quality education to our students. We entered this profession because we are passionate about being in the classroom, helping students of all ages and backgrounds learn, grow, and advance their career goals. At CCRI, we take great pride in the impact we have on our students and the broader Rhode Island community. Our programs, such as Dental Assisting and Dental Hygiene, produce highly skilled professionals who are in high demand, directly contributing to the state's healthcare workforce. Many of our graduates go on to work in local dental offices, community health centers, and beyond, improving access to essential oral healthcare services.

Over the years, our jobs have undeniably become more difficult. While we remain committed to student success, the demands on faculty have increased without corresponding improvements in compensation. Our salaries have not kept pace with inflation, and many of us are forced to take on second jobs or additional responsibilities just to make ends meet. This is not sustainable for faculty members who dedicate their lives to educating the next generation of professionals.

Many of our colleagues in State Government, including some of our peers at CCRI, received a 5% raise last year and a 4% raise this year. We are happy for them, but we have not received the same increases and are falling behind. The Governor's current budget includes only a 2.5% increase for us, which does not keep up with the rising cost of living and is fundamentally unfair. Every faculty and staff member at CCRI plays a vital role in the institution's success, and all of us deserve fair and competitive compensation.

We love our students, we love CCRI, and we love Rhode Island. Our work is essential to the state's economy, and we are deeply invested in the success of our students and our institution. To continue attracting and retaining top-tier faculty and staff, we need fair and equitable salary increases.

We urge you to increase funding for CCRI to ensure that faculty and staff receive the raises they deserve. Your support is critical in maintaining the quality of education and student success at CCRI. Please stand with us in advocating for fair compensation.

Sincerely,



Kerri Friel

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