



March 3, 2026

The Honorable Arthur J. Corvese
Chair, House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: HJR 7974

I write in strong support of the House Joint Resolution creating an eleven (11) member special legislative commission to study and provide recommendations for the creation of a statewide teacher healthcare plan. This resolution represents a thoughtful and responsible step toward improving transparency, sustainability, and long-term stability in how healthcare benefits are structured and negotiated for educators across Rhode Island.

Healthcare costs are among the most significant and complex components of public sector collective bargaining agreements. In local school districts, these negotiations directly affect municipal budgets, employee compensation, and taxpayer resources. Establishing a legislative commission to carefully evaluate the feasibility and implications of a statewide teacher healthcare plan is both prudent and necessary.

Importantly, the commission would promote greater transparency from both labor and management in the negotiation of public sector contracts. Healthcare benefits are often discussed in highly technical terms that can be difficult for stakeholders and the public to fully understand. A comprehensive statewide study would clarify cost drivers, administrative structures, and long-term fiscal impacts, benefiting educators, school committees, municipalities, and taxpayers alike.

The commission's charge to examine efficiencies and potential cost savings is also critical. A statewide model may create opportunities to reduce administrative duplication, leverage economies of scale, and stabilize premium growth—but these possibilities must be evaluated objectively. By requiring quarterly reports beginning September 1, 2026, and a final report by September 1, 2027, the resolution ensures accountability and transparency throughout the process.

In addition, the commission would review the relationship between local bargaining parties and the inter-local trust that administers healthcare plans subject to negotiation. Understanding this dynamic is essential to ensuring that any recommendations are grounded in operational reality.

At its core, this resolution promotes transparency, fiscal responsibility, and informed policymaking. For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support.

Sincerely,

Alexander Lucini

Government Relations Director, NEARI