

Dear members of the House Finance Committee,

I am proud to submit written testimony on behalf of the Professional Staff Association (PSA) at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI). A place I've been honored to work for over 20 years.

Currently, I work in the Records Department and also serve as the President of the PSA bargaining unit. My union colleagues work in all aspects of the College, including academic affairs, business and finance, student services, information technology, security, workforce partnerships, etc. We work directly with students, faculty, staff, and visitors to make sure our college is meeting the needs of the those that seek our services.

As one of the largest community colleges in New England and the only one in Rhode Island, CCRI plays a major role in the education, training, and success of the state workforce. PSA members take their responsibilities seriously and work with pride to meet students where they are and help them achieve their future goals.

While many students that are exploring opportunities at CCRI are also trying to balance outside responsibilities, especially during challenging times that include the high cost of living. My PSA members are also facing these obstacles. Many of my associates need to work two or three jobs just to pay their basic bills. This is not sustainable! Not only does it lead to burnout, it increases turnover. CCRI can't continue to lose staff because they simply can't afford to remain working at the college.

One simple consideration is reconfiguring the salary bands for CCRI-PSA. For example, our colleagues at Rhode Island College (RIC) have pay ranges that don't compare equitably to the CCRI-PSA levels for comparable work and classification. This is especially frustrating, as CCRI and RIC are the only two state colleges under the guidance of the Council on Postsecondary Education. It is unfathomable that there is such a discrepancy in pay. This inconsistency negatively impacts morale and is financially taxing. Therefore, it is imperative for CCRI-PSA to gain parity in compensation.

Again, I return to the focus that my members undertake every day. Making CCRI the place anyone looking for education and training can turn to for improving their lives, contributing to the success of their state and their organization. These folks need dedicated staff to assist them on their journey. CCRI-PSA has members that rise to this challenge daily. However, we need your support for equitable compensation, so these professionals don't need to resign from the college just to earn a livable wage.

We strongly believe a financial investment in the CCRI workforce is necessary and reasonable and we look to you as our elected leaders to help us achieve this realistic goal. We will be entering negotiations with the OPC next year, and it's imperative that we secure

fair raises to attract and retain dedicated staff. We urge you to support and expand CCRI's budget request so the college has the ability to meet the needs of all our students and staff.

Respectfully submitted by Jude Tomasino