



2026 NEARI LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

NEARI enters the 2026 legislative session focused on four main priorities seeking to strengthen public education, protect retirement security, and advance fair wages, benefits, and working conditions for all employees.

1. Protecting public education from federal voucher schemes

NEARI unequivocally opposes the Trump Administration's nationwide voucher scheme disguised as scholarship granting organizations (SGOs) and its broader efforts to dismantle public education and undermine democratic, locally governed school systems.

- **Oppose** participation in this opt-in federal school voucher tax credit program and urge Governor McKee to OPT OUT, and prevent RI from being used as a test case for the Trump Administration's unaccountable voucher agenda, which diverts public dollars away from public schools and lacks transparency and oversight.
- **Support** strong state-level protections to counteract federal actions and policies designed to weaken public education, privatize public resources, and erode local control.

2. Ensuring fair funding for public education, higher education & public health

K-12 Public Education

- **Increase** funding in the state budget to meet the needs of students, educators, and communities.
- **Revise** the state education funding formula to better reflect student needs and ensure municipalities pay their fair share.
- **Support** a moratorium on charter school expansion.

Higher Education & Public Health

- **Increase** funding in the state budget to meet the needs of students, educators, and workers.
- **Protect** investments in URI, CCRI, and the Department of Health to stabilize staffing, support student needs, and ensure safe, well-functioning institutions.

3. Improving Pension and Retirement Security

Rhode Island must restore fairness and long-term sustainability to the ERSRI system. NEARI supports any legislation that improves pension and retirement benefits for both active and retired members.

4. Strengthening Collective Bargaining and Fair Working Conditions

To protect workers and stabilize the education workforce, NEARI supports legislation that expands collective bargaining rights and workplace fairness, including:

- State Sector Neutrality requiring:
 - Employer neutrality and card-check recognition for all State Labor Relations Act (SLRA) elections.
 - Thirty minutes of paid union orientation for all newly hired public-sector employees.
- Improvements to the desk audit criteria to ensure an equitable process.
- Legislation allowing state employees to negotiate longevity pay.

NEARI looks forward to working with lawmakers, education partners, labor allies, and community stakeholders throughout the 2026 legislative session to advance policies that strengthen public education, protect workers and retirees, and ensure every Rhode Island community has access to fully funded, high-quality public services.

For questions or additional information regarding bill support or opposition, please contact NEARI Government Relations Director Alex Lucini at alucini@neari.org.

Learn More

More information and resources at neari.org/legislativeprogram

VOUCHERS



bit.ly/No-RI-vouchers

CHARTERS



bit.ly/NEARI-charters

PENSION



bit.ly/NEARI-pensionfight

DESK AUDIT



bit.ly/desk-audit

About NEARI

The National Education Association Rhode Island (NEARI) is a union and professional organization with a proud history of serving Rhode Island since 1845. NEARI is nearly 12,000 members strong, we are classroom teachers; education support professionals; higher education faculty, staff, and graduate assistants; municipal and state workers; and retirees. We are affiliated with the National Education Association (NEA) and RI AFL-CIO.



1. Federal Tax Credit Voucher Program

HB7163 / SB2139	Requires both the General Assembly and the Governor to decide whether and under what circumstances to participate in the federal tax credit voucher program.
-----------------	--

2. Fair Funding & Protecting K-12 Public Ed, Higher Ed & Public Health

HB7415 / SB2787	Prohibits granting approval for new or expanded district charter schools, independent charter schools, or mayoral academies for the 2026-2029 school years. It also restricts state funding for unapproved charter schools during this period.
-----------------	--

HB7127	State Budget Article 9 relating to Education Funding.
--------	---

HB8351 / SB3015	Establishes the Rhode Island education funding and accountability act, which would include a totally revised and revamped formula for funding all levels of public education in Rhode Island.
-----------------	---

3. Improving Pension and Retirement Security

ACTIVE

HB 7683 / SB2678	Teacher Survivor Benefit. Increases monthly minimum benefit for a spouse, domestic partner, former spouse.
------------------	---

HB7053 / SB2537	135-Day Service. Gives teachers, who take an unpaid parental or medical leave during the year, credit for a year of service for that school year if they served a minimum of 135 days.
-----------------	---

HB7390	Rule of 90 at 60. Allows teachers, state, and municipal employees to retire upon the earlier of reaching age 60 with 30 years of service or the employee's retirement eligibility date under present state statutes.
--------	---

HB7160 / SB2842	Rule of 85. Allows teachers, state and municipal employees to retire when they have at least 28 years of active service and their retirement age, when combined with the number of their years of service reaches, the number 85.
-----------------	--

RETIRED

HB7253 / SB2374	5 to 3 Retro to 2012 Retirees. Changes the teacher and state employees' retirement benefit calculations' cutoff date from 7.1.24 to 7.1.12, for all retirement members eligible to and who retire on or after the new 7.1.12 cutoff date.
-----------------	--

HB8147 / SB2818	COLA Benefit. Retirees in the pension system receive cost of living adjustment compounded into the retiree's total retirement benefits each year beginning 1.1.26 (prospective only).
-----------------	--

4. Collective Bargaining & Fair Working Conditions

HB7217 / SB2171	Desk Audit. Amends the desk audit analysis and classification specification so that the lack of supervision of other FTEs does not prevent an employee from receiving a classification upgrade.
-----------------	--

HB7291 / SB2924	State Sector Neutrality. Allows employees not represented by a union to form a collective bargaining unit by demonstrating majority support through signed cards, while all management and administrative personnel shall remain neutral.
-----------------	--

HB7055 / SB2501	Longevity. Beginning 7.1.26, allows state union employees to negotiate longevity payments in their collective bargaining agreements.
-----------------	---