***Deputy Speaker Charlene Lima***

***DEPUTY SPEAKER***

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**PRESS RELEASE**

            Press release of Deputy Speaker Charlene Lima, 14th District, Cranston and Providence for immediate release. Any questions please call 401.946.5707.

Calling it a misuse of taxpayer dollars, Deputy Speaker Charlene Lima, today announced that she will prefile legislation prohibiting the State and municipalities from negotiating contracts that give bonuses for getting the Covid vaccine.

It is unfair to give bonuses to state and municipal employees for getting the Covid vaccine while so many state and municipal workers made the decision to get vaccinated without taxpayer funded financial bonuses.

It is also unfair to the taxpayers who made the decision to get the vaccine because they felt it was the right thing to do for themselves and for the health and safety of the public and without any financial inducements to have to fund these bonuses.

The fact that monies for these potential vaccine-related bonuses would come from the presently available federal covid relief does not make it right. Once we allow bonuses for getting vaccines today, when there are no federal monies available it will set a precedent in future contract negotiations and Rhode Island taxpayers will foot the bill. There are countless other areas for using these federal relief dollars that would be justifiable to the public.

I want it to be abundantly clear that I fully support state or municipal employees receiving bonuses for their unselfish work during this Covid pandemic. I support unions negotiating bonuses for their members for their work-related performances.

These bonuses should be based on their public work performance and sacrifices during the pandemic not on whether they get the Covid vaccine. Most importantly these bonuses should be available to all state and municipal employees not just those who up to now have decided not to be receive the Covid vaccine. This is unfair to all the other state and municipal workers who already received the vaccine without financial inducements and who would not receive these new contracted bonuses.

The legislature has in the past precluded certain areas from contract negotiations such as workman’s compensation benefits and defined benefits where the state picks the Provider and precludes union contracts from choosing their own provider. There are also more examples based on public policy decisions.

So, for all these reasons, bonuses based on whether you received the vaccine should not be in contract negotiations. These bonuses should be based on the job performance of state and municipal employees during this pandemic.