H5421: JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AND SUBMIT TO THE ELECTORS A PROPOSITION OF AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE -- RIGHT TO ADEQUATE EDUCATION

I am writing in support of H5421, to add two sections to the state constitution guaranteeing adequate education for all residents. Rhode Island has failed its residents in providing an adequate education for decades, and the challenges are only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A constitutional right to education will allow all students to assert their right to an education, especially our most marginal students. English Language Learning students especially need this protection in our state as Rhode Island, as according to RI Kids Count only 1% of seventh-grade ELL students met expectations of the PARCC assessment.

A constitutional right to education in Rhode Island will provide accountability to government agencies and schools to provide education for all students, regardless of ability, status, race, or ethnicity. It is an essential step in our state to tackle the educational crisis.

H5635: JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AND PUBLISH AND TO SUBMIT TO THE ELECTORS A PROPOSITION OF AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION (ELECTIONS)

My name is Morgan Awner and I am registered voter in Providence. I am writing in support of H5635, to lower the voting age to age 16 for elections. This essential to foster the next generation of citizens and ignite civic education earlier. According to the United States Elections Project, young people aged 18-24 have the lowest turnout from any other age group. However, when youth are registered to vote, they vote in large numbers – over 75% of registered 18-24 year-olds turned out to vote in 2016.

When young people are asked to register, they vote. But according to Pew Research survey, only 6% of youth were asked to register to vote in school or part of class. Lowering the voting age to 16 would make voter registration a part of high school rite of passage, like gaining a driver's license. Voter registration should happen within schools in conjunction with robust civic education, as the prime place to encourage the next generation of citizens. However, when the voting age is 18, schools neglect civic education and voter registration, and many young people are never asked to register.

16 and 17 year olds are mature enough to vote, the science in cognitive abilities between 18 year olds and 16 and 17 year olds does not show many significant differences in political skills or civic knowledge. One of the biggest benefits to allowing youth to vote at 16 is the ability for youth to register at the DMV when they receive their permit or driver's license. Registering to vote is one of the biggest barriers to voting for young people, so this logistical hurtle can increase participation of our youngest citizens. Young people also have a huge stake in the biggest issues facing Rhode Island, like climate change, and deserve to have their voices heard!

The time is now to pass H5635 and lower the voting age!