



April 28, 2026

The Honorable Joseph Solomon, Jr.
Chair, House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island House Committee on Corporations
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Letter of Support for House Bill 7839 and House Bill 8128, An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions - Public Accountancy

Dear Chairperson Solomon and Members of the House Corporations Committee:

My name is Bonnie Stewart, and I serve as CEO and Executive Director of the Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants (CTCPA), which represents thousands of CPAs across Connecticut. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of House Bill 7839 and House Bill 8128, legislation that would modernize Rhode Island's Public Accountancy Act by adopting enhanced mobility and an additional pathway to CPA licensure consistent with the 9th edition of the Uniform Accountancy Act.

I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Rhode Island Board of Accountancy for its thoughtful work in drafting and requesting this legislation for consideration during the 2026 legislative session. I also appreciate the Committee's attention to this important issue and its willingness to consider legislation that is critical to the future of the CPA profession, the strength of the business community, and the protection of the public.

I have been closely involved in CPA licensure modernization both in Connecticut and nationally. In 2024, at the request of then-Rhode Island Society of CPAs Chair Michele Forcino and RISCPA President and CEO Melissa Travis, I had the privilege of appearing before the Rhode Island Board of Accountancy to discuss Connecticut's work on this issue and to ask the Board to support expanded mobility and an additional pathway to licensure. At that time, Connecticut was preparing to pursue similar legislation in our 2025 legislative session. I was very pleased to see the Rhode Island Board engage seriously with the issue, recognize the importance of alignment with neighboring states and the national framework, and ultimately help move this legislation forward.

Connecticut enacted its CPA licensure modernization legislation in 2025. The measure passed unanimously in both the House and Senate and went into effect on October 1, 2025. Our legislation was developed through close collaboration between CTCPA and the Connecticut State Board of Accountancy, and it was grounded in the same core principles reflected in the Rhode Island bills: preserving the rigor and integrity of the

CPA license, protecting the public, strengthening interstate mobility, and creating more flexible pathways for qualified candidates.

Even in the short time since Connecticut's law took effect, we have seen encouraging candidate engagement. Individuals are actively choosing among the available pathways based on how they learn best, their financial circumstances, and their career goals. Some are continuing to pursue the traditional master's degree pathway. Others are choosing a bachelor's degree plus additional experience because they learn and develop most effectively through hands-on professional work. Still others are combining accounting coursework with additional study in areas such as information technology, data analytics, and other fields that are increasingly important to employers and the public.

This flexibility matters. It does not lower standards. Candidates must still meet rigorous education requirements, pass the Uniform CPA Examination, complete meaningful professional experience, and satisfy the ethical and regulatory requirements of the licensing board. What modernization does is recognize that there is more than one appropriate way for a qualified individual to develop the knowledge, judgment, and professional competence required of a CPA.

The need for action is urgent. The accounting profession continues to face a well-documented pipeline challenge, and employers of all sizes are struggling to recruit and retain qualified accounting talent. This is especially significant for small and mid-sized firms, local businesses, nonprofit organizations, municipalities, and other entities that rely on CPAs for audit, tax, advisory, financial reporting, and compliance services. Rhode Island's economy depends on a strong, accessible, and mobile CPA workforce.

Rhode Island and Connecticut are closely connected economically and professionally. CPAs, firms, employers, and clients routinely operate across state lines. When states in the region modernize their licensure laws in a coordinated and consistent way, they reduce unnecessary barriers, support workforce flexibility, and help preserve CPAs' ability to serve clients efficiently while remaining subject to appropriate oversight and professional accountability.

Rhode Island's action this year is also part of a broad national movement. Across the country, states are adopting or advancing legislation and rules to implement an additional pathway to CPA licensure and updated mobility provisions. Connecticut is one of the states that has already enacted this framework, and many others have either passed similar measures or are actively considering them. If Rhode Island enacts House Bill 7839 and House Bill 8128, it will align with this national framework and the profession's nationwide direction.

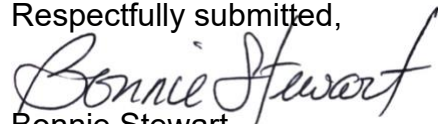
For Rhode Island, this legislation will:

- Strengthen the CPA pipeline by giving qualified candidates more than one rigorous route to licensure;
- Preserve public protection and the integrity of the CPA license;
- Enhance interstate mobility for CPAs serving clients and employers across state lines;
- Support Rhode Island businesses, nonprofits, governmental entities, and accounting firms that rely on CPA expertise; and
- Ensure Rhode Island remains aligned with national standards and neighboring states.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support and advance House Bill 7839 and House Bill 8128. I appreciate the Committee's work on this important matter, and I would be pleased to answer any questions or provide any additional information that may be helpful as you consider this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your attention to an issue that is essential to the future of the CPA profession and to the businesses, organizations, and members of the public we serve.

Respectfully submitted,

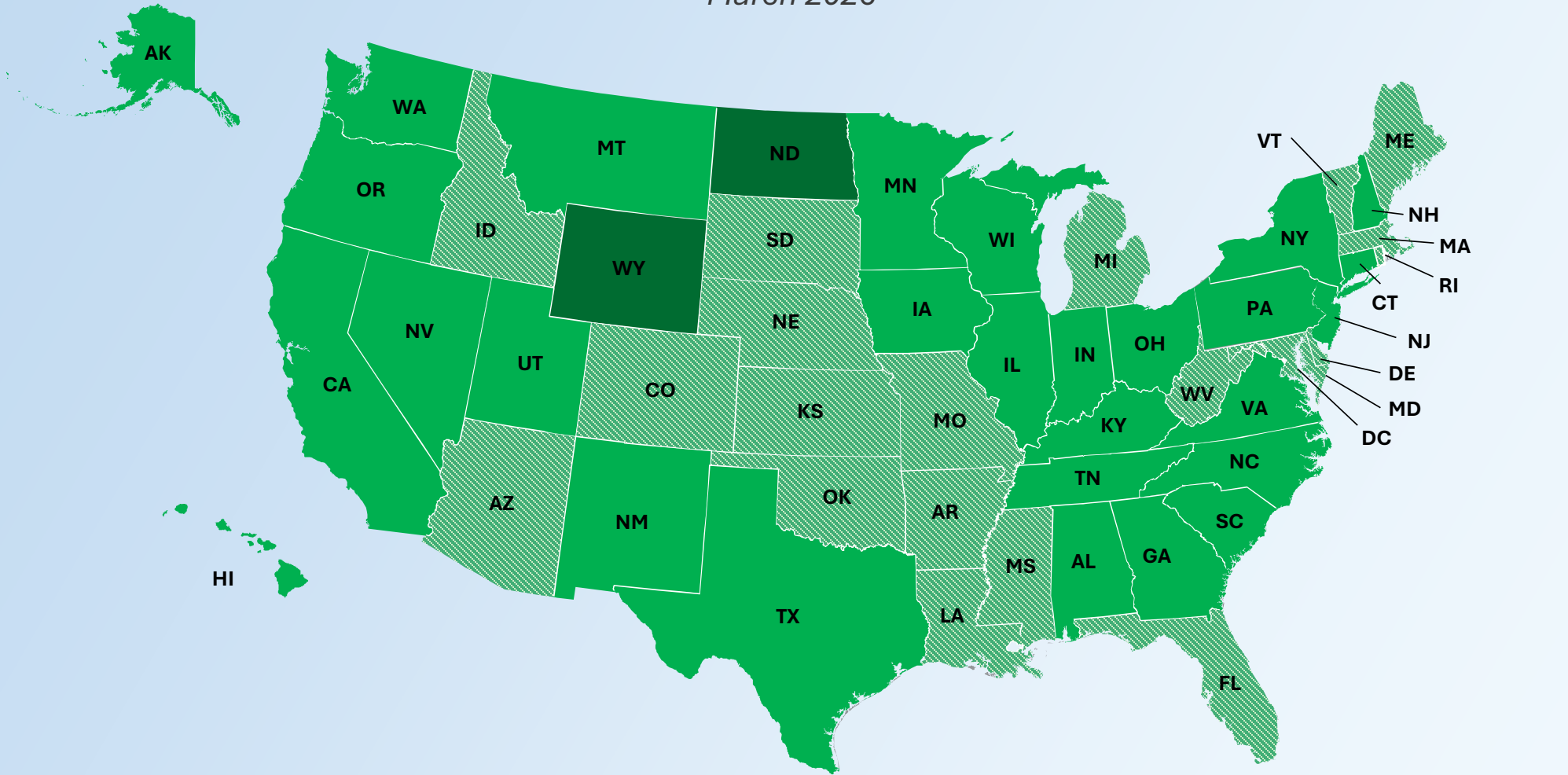
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bonnie Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bonnie Stewart

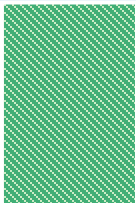
CEO and Executive Director

CPA Pathways Progress

March 2026



New pathways passed



Changes being pursued in 2026



Changes to be pursued in 2027