



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ^{AFT}
AFL-CIO

To: House Education Committee
From: Maribeth Calabro, President
Date: April 22, 2025
Re: **Ethnic Studies**
Testimony in **support** of 2025-H 5836 (Representative Morales, et. al.)

Maribeth K Calabro

Chairperson and Members of the Board,

On behalf of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP), we submit this testimony in strong support of implementing a comprehensive ethnic studies curriculum in all high schools. As educators, advocates, and proud partners in public education, we believe that inclusive, accurate, and representative curriculum is essential to the success of every student.

Students in Providence — many of whom come from richly diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds — have been calling for the inclusion of ethnic studies for years. Their voices have been clear and persistent: they want to see their histories, cultures, and identities reflected in what they learn. We hear them, and we stand with them.

Ethnic studies is not only about representation — though that is critically important. It is about academic empowerment. Research shows that ethnic studies improve student engagement, boost academic performance, and foster a deeper sense of belonging. These are not just educational outcomes — they are justice outcomes. For a state that has long grappled with equity and systemic challenges, ethnic studies offer an opportunity to transform education in a way that is meaningful and long overdue.

We also recognize that implementing ethnic studies must be done thoughtfully, with teacher support, professional development, and curriculum resources that align with high academic standards and cultural responsiveness. RIFTHP is committed to working collaboratively with the district, educators, students, and community members to ensure this program is successful and sustainable.

In closing, we urge you to honor the advocacy and leadership of Providence students and take bold action in implementing ethnic studies as a permanent and robust part of the curriculum. Let us give our students the education they deserve — one that tells the full story, values every culture, and prepares them to thrive in a diverse world.

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