

Dana Borrelli-Murray, CEO

**Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England
House Bill 7416**

Chairman McNamara and committee, thank you for your time today. My name is Dana Borrelli-Murray, CEO of Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England- my home address 5 Berwick Lane Cranston.

At Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England, we serve about 4,000 girls each year, many from families who are working incredibly hard to support their children's futures.

Thirty percent of our Girl Scout families receive financial aid, and we serve a high number of blue-collar, working families who are thinking every day about access, affordability, and opportunity after high school. Additionally, 20 percent of the girls we serve participate in Community Partnership Troops, designed specifically to reach girls in historically marginalized communities who may have fewer pathways into higher education.

The Gold Award—the highest achievement in Girl Scouting—is already an extraordinary accomplishment. Fewer than two percent of Girl Scouts earn it. It requires a minimum 80-hour, self-directed leadership project, deep community engagement, and rigorous review. But for many families, especially those navigating financial barriers, the question is always: *What does this open up for my child?*

Automatic admission to Rhode Island's colleges and universities provides a clear, tangible answer.

For families, it reduces uncertainty and financial stress. It makes the pathway to college more visible and attainable. And for our older Girl Scouts, it creates a powerful incentive to stay engaged through high school, complete their Gold Award, and see their leadership recognized in a meaningful way.

This policy doesn't just retain talent—it rewards perseverance, leadership, and community impact, and it helps ensure that the young women we are developing as leaders can build their futures right here in Rhode Island.