

June 1, 2026

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to **House Bill 7416**, which seeks to mandate automatic admission to Rhode Island's public institutions of higher education for Eagle Scouts and Girl Scout Gold Award recipients.

I do not write this as someone unfamiliar with the scouting program. I write this as the proud mother of three Eagle Scouts. I know firsthand the grueling years of dedication, the countless hours of community service, and the immense grit required to achieve this rank. It is precisely because I know the true value of this achievement that I am so opposed to this legislation. Attaching a state law to the rank of Eagle Scout does not elevate it, it cheapens it.

Aside from the philosophical flaws of this bill, it presents a massive, glaring **logistical failure** that demonstrates a total lack of understanding regarding how the Scouting advancement process actually works:

- **The Timeline Mismatch:** By regulation, a Scout has until their 18th birthday to complete their requirements and submit their final Board of Review paperwork.
- **The National Administrative Lag:** Once submitted, the paperwork undergoes an extensive verification process at both the local Council and National levels. This process takes months.
- **A Real-World Example:** My own son submitted his final Eagle paperwork in January of this year. He graduated from high school last month, yet he only received his official credentials from National *just one week ago*.

If this bill passes, how are our public universities supposed to implement it? A high school senior applying for Fall college admission must submit their applications between November and January. If their official Eagle Scout rank isn't approved by National until May or June, the "automatic admission" mandate is entirely useless for the standard admissions cycle. It forces universities to chase retroactive paperwork creating a bureaucratic nightmare for admissions offices and families alike.

Beyond these practical failures, there is a deep irony in taking an achievement rooted in selfless service and quiet grit and turning it into a government-mandated transactional benefit. When the legislature attaches a legal "free ticket" to an award like Eagle Scout, it fundamentally shifts the motivation for our youth. Instead of a young person pushing through a massive service project out of a genuine desire to lead and grow, it risks becoming a calculated checkbox for a college application shortcut. It commercializes an honor that is supposed to be above political transaction.

Our state universities already have robust, professional, and holistic admissions processes in place. They evaluate the whole student—academic trends, unique hardships, and extracurricular portfolios. They do not need the General Assembly to micro-manage their criteria or use state universities as prizes to be distributed by politicians. If the legislature can mandate automatic college admission for scouts this season, what stops a future legislature from mandating preferences for the children of certain state employees, political donors, or specific clubs next season?

An Eagle Scout court of honor is deeply meaningful precisely because the rank was earned for its own sake, under the radar, through hard work. Turning it into a legal lever to pull for a bureaucratic benefit strips the achievement of its integrity and creates an uneven playing field for the thousands of Rhode Island students who dedicate themselves to other, equally demanding youth organizations, family responsibilities, or employment.

I urge this committee to respect the logistics of the Scouting program, protect the independence of our public universities, and vote **Inexpedient to Legislate** (or **HOLD for Further Study**) on H7416.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Curry