



FROM: Andrew MacMannis, Collective Action for Education

**Testimony in Support of HB7003**

**February 9, 2026**

**TO:** House Education Committee

My name is Andrew MacMannis, Chief of External Affairs for Collective Action for Education, and I strongly support HB7003, relating to education and the health and safety of pupils. In light of both the recent high-profile hazing cases in the state of Rhode Island, as well as the countless other cases of hazing and bullying that goes unreported, the establishment of a clear anti-hazing policy in sports is essential.

As a former student-athlete, I understand the importance of a positive locker room culture, a safe practice environment, and supportive coaching. I was fortunate to experience track and field as a place of belonging and stability during the high school years, when students' social and emotional well-being can already be fragile. It is difficult to imagine how harmful it would be for that sense of safety to be taken away by teammates or peers. The recent stories in our state are deeply troubling and underscore that toxic or violent team environments are simply unacceptable.

Now, as a father of an elementary school student just starting his athletic journey, I am seeing again the positives that come from sports and working together as a team. I also see the shared responsibility we all have to ensure those experiences remain safe, supportive, and rooted in respect for every child. Right now, my son is surrounded by excellent coaches and teammates at Warwick Firefighters Soccer and Warwick PAL Basketball and Lacrosse. This bill will help create the policy structure to ensure that this positive environment is maintained as he grows into secondary school sports.

Collective Action for Education is committed to ensuring that every Rhode Island student, especially those in historically marginalized communities, has access to a high-quality public school, whether district public, or charter public, or otherwise. Athletics and other out-of-school-time activities play a vital role in building community, supporting student well-being, and strengthening academic engagement. Hazing undermines these benefits and erodes the safe, supportive environments students deserve. For these reasons, we respectfully urge passage of HB7003.

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