



March 10, 2026

The Honorable Joseph McNamara
Chair, House Education Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7417

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of NEARI, I write in strong support of H 7417 – The Save RI School Libraries Act.

School libraries are foundational to the academic success of our students and to the health of our public education system. Research consistently shows that when students have access to well-funded libraries and diverse reading materials, they read more frequently, develop stronger literacy skills, and demonstrate improved academic outcomes. Just as importantly, school libraries help cultivate a lifelong love of reading and learning.

Certified school librarians play a critical role in making this possible. They are trained educators who curate collections that meet a wide range of reading levels and interests, ensuring that every student can find books that engage and challenge them. Their expertise helps students grow not only as readers, but also as thinkers.

In today's information-rich environment, the role of school librarians has become even more essential. Students are constantly navigating social media, online sources, artificial intelligence tools, and an overwhelming amount of information. Librarians teach students how to evaluate sources, recognize misinformation and disinformation, practice responsible digital citizenship, and use information ethically and effectively. These are core skills students need to succeed in college, careers, and civic life.

However, not all students currently have equitable access to these critical resources. Across Rhode Island, some schools lack dedicated library spaces or certified librarians, leaving students without consistent support in developing reading habits and information literacy skills.

The Save Rhode Island School Libraries Act establishes clear and achievable standards to ensure that every public school has a functioning library space, an appropriate collection of materials, and access to a certified school librarian. By phasing in these requirements over time, the legislation provides school districts with a realistic pathway to strengthen library programs while prioritizing student learning.

This bill is ultimately about educational opportunity. It ensures that all students—regardless of their zip code—have access to the resources and professional guidance necessary to become strong readers, critical thinkers, and informed participants in a democratic society.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to support H 7417 – The Save RI School Libraries Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alexander Lucini".

Alexander Lucini
Government Relations Director, NEARI