



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

To: House Education Committee
From: Jeremy Sencer, Field Representative
Date: March 9, 2026
Re: **Save Rhode Island School Libraries Act**
Testimony in **Support** of 2026-**H 7417** (Representative Kislak, et. al.)

Chairman McNamara and Members of the Committee:

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP) supports H 7417, Save Rhode Island School Libraries Act, which establishes clear statewide standards to ensure that every public school has a permanent, dedicated library space staffed by a certified school librarian.

School libraries are essential to student learning, literacy development, and academic achievement. Research consistently demonstrates that students in schools with well-funded library programs and certified school librarians achieve higher reading scores, demonstrate stronger research skills, and have higher graduation rates. Certified school librarians play a critical instructional role in fostering a love of reading while teaching information and media literacy skills that are indispensable in today's digital environment.

H 7417 appropriately recognizes that access to accurate information, vetted resources, and professional guidance is foundational to college and career readiness. By requiring that every school maintain a permanent library space, adequate collections, up-to-date materials, and sufficient technology, the bill ensures equitable access to learning resources for all students, regardless of zip code.

Importantly, the phased-in staffing requirements provide a thoughtful and realistic implementation timeline while establishing clear minimum standards. Guaranteeing a full-time certified school librarian in larger schools and proportional staffing in smaller schools ensures that students receive professional support in research, digital literacy, and independent reading.

At a time when students are navigating unprecedented levels of misinformation and digital content, certified school librarians are uniquely trained to help students evaluate sources, think critically, and become responsible consumers of information. This legislation strengthens Rhode Island's commitment to literacy, equity, and academic excellence.

RIFTHP urges the committee to support H 7417.

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