

AMERICAN EXCHANGE PROJECT

March 9, 2026

The Honorable Joseph McNamara
Chairman, House Education Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Room 135
Providence, RI 02903

Sent via email to Lisa Cataldi, Committee Clerk: HouseEducation@rilegislature.gov

RE: American Exchange Project Constituent Comments in support of 2026 - H7730

Dear Chair McNamara and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of American Exchange Project, I am writing to express our strong support for **House Bill 2026 - H7730**, which would establish a two-year pilot Student Cultural Exchange Program administered by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Providing students with the opportunity to experience life in another region of the country is a powerful educational tool that can cultivate empathy, civic trust, and a shared sense of national belonging in the next generation. Equally important, H7730 is designed to ensure that participation in the program reflects the diversity of Rhode Island's students and school communities. A structured domestic cultural exchange program allows students to engage directly with peers and host families from across geographic, political, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic spectrums. Programs that intentionally bring together young people from different backgrounds and geographic regions dismantle stereotypes and biases, strengthen interpersonal skills, and promote thoughtful dialogue about the issues facing communities across the country. These experiences foster civic awareness, empathy, and a deeper understanding of the diverse communities that make up the United States. These skills are increasingly essential to prepare the next generation for leadership and to be engaged citizens.

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American Exchange Project strongly supports the creation of this pilot and the bill's provision allowing the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to partner with an experienced organization to administer the program. Implementing a successful exchange requires significant coordination, including recruiting training exchange managers, screening and supporting host families, preparing students and families for participation, ensuring appropriate safety and supervision standards, managing travel logistics, and maintaining strong partnerships with schools and communities in participating states.

American Exchange Project has extensive experience designing and administering the country's first *domestic* intercultural exchange program through two-week exchanges defined by adventure, connection, and hometown pride. We have developed the national infrastructure, partnerships and operational systems necessary to coordinate exchanges at scale while ensuring student safety, meaningful civic engagement, and equitable access for participants. American Exchange Project has received a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation to strengthen the infrastructure in Rhode Island and is on track to activate the American Exchange Project program in the state in the fall of 2026.

We would welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and to the General Assembly as this initiative moves forward. With the right implementation partner, this pilot program can be launched effectively and positioned for long-term success, not only allowing Rhode Island students to gain meaningful exposure to the diversity of life experiences that shape our nation, but also introducing students from across the country to everything the Ocean State has to offer.

We respectfully encourage the Committee to support H7730 and advance this important initiative. Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to expanding civic opportunities for Rhode Island students.

Sincerely,



David McCullough, III

CEO & Cofounder, American Exchange Project

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