



*Distinctive Communities  
Powerful Alliance*

March 17, 2026

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

RE: HOUSE BILL 7897 – AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

Chair McNamara and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we are writing to express our support for House Bill 7897, which would require all schools and educational institutions to develop and implement comprehensive school safety plans ensuring immediate access to school facilities by first responders in an emergency.

The League strongly supports efforts to enhance school safety and recognizes the critical importance of providing law enforcement and emergency personnel with unobstructed access to school buildings, classrooms, and grounds during emergencies. Ensuring that emergency responders can quickly enter school facilities is a key factor in safeguarding students, faculty, and staff.

House Bill 7897 aligns with the League's priority of supporting municipal and school collaboration in emergency preparedness. The annual development, review, and submission of a comprehensive safety and emergency response plan to both the Department of Education and local public safety officials is a positive step toward standardizing safety protocols statewide. The flexibility provided for access methods, including secure electronic entry systems, key fobs, card access, or manual key access, acknowledges the varying needs and resources of schools across Rhode Island.

As municipalities work closely with local schools on emergency planning, we encourage continued dialogue between educational institutions, local police departments, and public safety officials to ensure that safety plans are practical, effective, and tailored to each school's unique circumstances. We also encourage sufficient lead time and guidance from the state to assist schools in meeting the new requirements without disrupting normal operations.

In conclusion, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns supports House Bill 7897 and its goal of strengthening school safety statewide while emphasizing the importance of collaboration between schools and municipal public safety agencies.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Education Committee