



March 17, 2026

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

RE: H 7899

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of NEARI, I write in opposition to H 7899, requiring the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to maintain a centralized list of non-certified school employees who have been terminated for good and just cause.

Educators and school employees across our state share a deep commitment to ensuring that students are supported by qualified, responsible, and professional staff. Rhode Island already maintains strong systems to ensure this standard for licensed educators. Through the educator certification process administered by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, individuals who hold professional credentials are subject to clear licensure requirements, disciplinary procedures, and due process protections. This system ensures both accountability and fairness.

For employees who are not subject to state certification—such as clerical or support staff—schools and districts already have established hiring safeguards. School employers conduct background checks, verify prior employment, and contact previous employers for references. In addition, employment applications commonly require prospective employees to disclose whether they have been terminated from prior positions in a school setting. These existing processes allow school leaders to make informed hiring decisions while also preserving appropriate due process and fairness for workers.

Creating a centralized list of non-certified employees who have been terminated raises significant concerns about accuracy, consistency, and due process. Unlike certified educators, these employees do not operate within a statewide licensure system that provides standardized investigative procedures or appeals structures. As a result, personnel decisions made at the local level—often under varying policies and circumstances—could effectively follow individuals indefinitely without a uniform mechanism to ensure fairness, context, or rehabilitation.

Additionally, the proposed reporting system could unintentionally create barriers to employment for school support staff who play essential roles in the daily functioning of our schools. Custodial staff, clerical personnel, paraprofessionals not requiring certification, and many other employees contribute significantly to the safe and supportive environments students rely upon. A permanent state-maintained record based on local employment decisions could discourage qualified

individuals from seeking work in education and further strain the ability of schools to recruit and retain these vital employees.

While we share the goal of maintaining safe and effective school environments, we believe existing hiring practices already provide school leaders with the tools necessary to evaluate candidates responsibly. Rather than establishing a new state-maintained list that may lack consistent standards and due process protections, efforts should focus on strengthening existing employment screening practices and ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all school employees. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to oppose this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alexander Lucini". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Alexander Lucini
Government Relations Director, NEARI