

# NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL SYSTEM

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Rep. Joseph McNamara, Chair

House Education Committee

## **Re: H 7895 – Safe School Technology Act of 2026**

Dear Chairperson McNamara and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Narragansett School System and the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding H 7895, the Safe School Technology Act of 2026.

We share the core concerns that motivate this legislation. As school leaders, we are deeply committed to protecting students from the potential harms of technology, including inappropriate content, excessive screen time, and misuse of personal data. These are real issues that districts across Rhode Island are actively working to address through policies, safeguards, and ongoing engagement with families.

However, we respectfully oppose H 7895 in its current form for several key reasons.

First, while the bill seeks to reduce potential harms associated with technology, it risks limiting schools' ability to develop students' responsible and effective use of technology. In today's world, digital tools are not optional—they are foundational to college, career, and civic readiness. Schools play a critical role not only in restricting harmful use, but in explicitly teaching students how to navigate technology safely, ethically, and productively. Overly rigid limitations may unintentionally undermine that essential instructional and civic responsibility.

Second, the bill establishes requirements for technology platforms—such as independent verification of effectiveness and the elimination of a wide range of common design features—that are not currently feasible within the existing educational technology marketplace. At present, there are few, if any, commercially available tools that would fully meet these standards. As a result, districts could face significant disruption to instruction without viable alternatives.

Third, the operational and financial implications of this legislation are substantial. Implementing the required device configurations, vetting processes, and compliance structures would require new systems, staffing, and oversight capacity at the district level. Without dedicated state funding or infrastructure to support these mandates, the cost burden would fall directly on local school systems, potentially diverting resources from core educational priorities.

Finally, while we strongly support increased transparency and caregiver engagement, the requirement to provide equivalent non-digital alternatives for all aspects of instruction—including assessments—raises significant logistical and equity challenges for schools.

We believe there is a productive path forward. Rather than imposing broad prohibitions and requirements that exceed current capacity, we encourage the General Assembly to partner with educators to develop

practical, phased, and evidence-based approaches to student technology use—ones that prioritize safety while preserving flexibility for schools to meet diverse student needs. Examples already exist in the creation of local Artificial Intelligence polices developed with the support of the Rhode Island Department of Education.

We appreciate the intent behind this legislation and stand ready to work collaboratively on solutions that are both protective and practicable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Cummings, Ed.D

Superintendent, Narragansett School System

On behalf of the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association