



April 2, 2026

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

RE: H8244 and H8266

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the National Education Association Rhode Island (NEARI) and our 12,000 members to express our appreciation for the intent behind the proposed legislative study commissions addressing student discipline policies and educator workforce pathways. These are critically important areas that directly impact student success, educator effectiveness, and the long-term strength of Rhode Island's public education system.

We want to be clear at the outset: NEARI does not oppose the important work of these commissions. Thoughtful, data-informed study of both student discipline practices and educator pipeline challenges is essential to advancing meaningful and sustainable education policy. We commend the sponsors for recognizing the need to examine these issues in a comprehensive manner.

However, we write to express concern regarding the composition of both proposed commissions.

Educator voice is paramount to advancing strong education policy reform. The individuals who work most closely with students every day—teachers and education support professionals—bring essential, experience-based perspectives on what works, what does not, and what unintended consequences may arise from policy changes. Without sufficient educator representation, there is a real risk that the commissions' findings and recommendations will not fully reflect the realities of today's classrooms.

In the case of the commission studying student discipline policies, we are concerned that the proposed membership does not include direct representation from classroom educators or their unions. Given that disciplinary practices are implemented and experienced most directly within classrooms and schools, the absence of educator voices represents a significant gap that should be addressed.

Similarly, while the educator workforce commission includes a single representative from either the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals or NEARI, we believe this approach falls short. Both organizations represent distinct memberships across Rhode Island's public education system, and both bring valuable and necessary perspectives. Given that the policy recommendations developed by this commission may directly impact working conditions, certification pathways, and ultimately collective bargaining agreements, it is essential that both unions have a seat at the table.

Ensuring representation from both the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals and NEARI would strengthen the commission's work, promote broader stakeholder buy-in, and help ensure that any recommendations are practical, equitable, and aligned with the realities of the educator workforce.

We respectfully urge the Committee to amend the composition of these study commissions to include robust educator representation, including designated seats for both NEARI and the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals. Doing so will help ensure that the commissions' work is

informed, balanced, and positioned to produce recommendations that can be successfully implemented in partnership with the educators who will ultimately carry them out.

We appreciate your consideration of these concerns and your continued commitment to strengthening Rhode Island's public schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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