



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, *Secretary of State*

February 27, 2024

Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Committee on Finance

RE: H7225 – Article 5 – GO Bonds Question 2 – State Archives and History Center

Dear Chair Abney,

As a former United States History and Government teacher, I have expanded the Department of State's programming to promote civic education. I have also revived the effort to establish a modern, state-of-the-art, permanent home for the State Archives. I believe we should highlight our history to benefit Rhode Island's students, educators, researchers, and visitors and to strengthen our economy. I write this letter in strong support of the \$60 million General Obligation bond (Question 2) in the Governor's proposed budget for a Rhode Island State Archives and History Center.

The Rhode Island State Archives holds over 17,000 cubic feet of permanent government records dating back to the founding years of the colony in the 1630s. As one of the original 13 colonies, our State has numerous invaluable treasures, including Original Public Laws and Private Acts of the General Assembly dating back to 1647; the Rhode Island Act of Renunciation from May 1776; and original copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

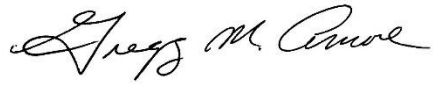
However, Rhode Island is the only state in New England without a purpose-built state-owned facility to house our archival collections and is the only state in the country that houses its archives in commercially-leased office space, putting us well behind in the care and protection of our historical assets. The annual lease cost of the Archives property is \$280,288, excluding utilities, yet it still does not have the capacity to hold all the State's collections – over 4,000 boxes of archival material are stored off-site.

The proposed General Obligation bond – as well as \$10 million in Rhode Island Capital Plan funds – will support the construction of a 52,000 square foot State Archives and History Center, a facility where the State's historical treasures can be adequately preserved and made easily accessible to Rhode Islanders. The Department of State team and I are also actively pursuing federal and philanthropic support for the balance of the \$101,655,492 total project cost.

The new Archives will help cement Rhode Island's superiority as a cultural tourism destination – enticing new cultural tourists and encouraging those who are already here to stay longer and spend more. Cultural heritage tourism has proven to be an important economic factor. Furthermore, an analysis conducted by the Associated General Contractors of America estimates that the construction alone will result in over \$168 million in total in-state spending at Rhode Island businesses and will support 364 full-time and part-time jobs per year during construction.

Therefore, I encourage this Committee and the full House to support the \$60 million General Obligation bond proposed in the Governor's budget, as the Rhode Island State Archives and History Center will serve as a civic and cultural center where both Rhode Islanders and tourists can view the rich history of our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregg M. Amore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G".

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

cc: Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance