

# Testimony from Jessica Purcell in Support of H5201, H5202, H5204

April 28, 2025

Marvin L. Abney  
Chairman, House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Jessica Purcell and I live in Richmond, RI. I am a member of the Chariho School Committee, and I have two children who are 2nd and 5th grade students and future Chariho graduates. I am passionate about the importance of public education and advocate for our regional school district, which in turn supports the health of our community and benefits the future. I am writing in support of bills **H5201**, **H5202**, **H5204** that are on the House Committee on Finance agenda for April 29, 2025.

The Chariho School Committee has unanimously approved resolutions for **H5201** and **H5204**, which I have attached to my letter.

The regional school district of Chariho spans three towns and over 126 geographic square miles. We are the largest regional district in the state, and the only one consisting of three towns and formed by state legislation. We have multiple elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, one career-tech center, and one alternative learning academy. These schools provide educational opportunities to students that live in the district as well as to other students who travel here from out-of-district because they want to be part of Chariho's success.

Bus transportation is crucial to our regional district and is the safest way to ensure that children arrive at school on-time every day. The state funding formula awards our district with categorical transportation aid but we have not always received full funding from the state, and the timelines of developing our school budget do not line up with the state budget. **H5204** would help this problem by mandating that the state fully fund categorical transportation aid.

Related to the cost of transportation, while other districts pay the transportation costs for their students to attend Chariho, we pay the cost for transportation to other districts and to non-public schools within our region. As this cost nears \$1M, Chariho and other districts would benefit from increased flexibility in funding this category of transportation. The Chariho administration would benefit from increasing the pool of possible transportation providers outside of the state system because it could save money and increase efficiency of services. Our current contracted provider is located less than a mile from the main campus.

I also support **H7202**, which would increase the regionalization bonus to 6% of the state's share of the foundation education aid. Unlike the current version of this act, the 6% would be ongoing and continuous without an expiration date. The regional aspect of our school district is our greatest asset, and we are a unique example of how regionalization can have a positive impact among rural communities.

These amendments to The Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act would further the purpose of the act itself, and be a benefit to the students and residents of the Chariho region. The amendment to An Act Relating to Education – Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits would provide our administration and taxpayers with the ability to secure effective transportation in a necessary area at a lower cost.

These investments and flexibility from our state government would be appreciated and make a positive impact on students. Thank you for your time as you consider these bills that will improve funding to regional school districts and support our communities.

Respectfully,  
Jessica Purcell  
Richmond, RI



School Committee Chair

## Chariho Regional School District Office of the Superintendent

455A Switch Road  
Wood River Junction, Rhode Island 02894

***All Kids. All of the Time.***



GINA M. PICARD  
Superintendent of Schools

MICHAEL COMELLA, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

### **Chariho Regional School District Committee Resolution In Support of Full Funding of Categorical Transportation Aid As Outlined in RIGL § 16-7.2-i**

**WHEREAS:** the regional incentive was promised to local districts when the Regional School Districts were formed; and

**WHEREAS:** the regional incentive was phased out in 2010 with the passage of the new funding formula; and

**WHEREAS:** Transportation Categorical Funds were provided to the Regional School Districts to partially offset the loss of the regional incentive by partially reimbursing the higher transportation costs of the regional districts; and

**WHEREAS:** the Regional School Districts have designed and implemented a number of innovative education programs that meet the learning needs of students; and

**WHEREAS:** the investment of resources in our Regional School Districts has yielded positive education results and innovative educational programs and services for students and adults that have been a wise investment of local and state resources; and

**WHEREAS:** it is necessary to ensure that students attending Regional School Districts continue to receive a high-quality public education and to reduce the burden on regional taxpayers; and


**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That the Chariho Regional School District Committee

1. Respectfully requests that Transportation Categorical Funds between the State and Regional Districts be fully funded in an amount equal to that intended under RIGL § 16-7.2-6(e) to protect the interests of regional school districts and advance the education mission of our schools;
2. Seeks the support of all School Committees, Town Councils and Legislators that comprise the regional school districts regarding this matter of mutual interest to the schools and taxpayers of our regional districts.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island General Assembly, the Charlestown Town Council, the Richmond Town Council, the Hopkinton Town Council and legislators of the Chariho Regional School District.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of the Resolution be sent as well to the Town Councils, School Committees and Legislators of the regional districts of Bristol-Warren, Exeter-West Greenwich and Foster-Glocester.

**The RESOLUTION shall take effect upon passage, WHERETO: The following bear witness:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CHARIHO School Committee Chairperson  
Vice Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CHARIHO School Committee Clerk

12/17/24  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The Chariho Regional School District does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, marital status, race, religion, genetic information, national origin, color, political affiliation, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability in accordance with applicable law.

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LOUISE D. DINSMORE  
School Committee Chairperson

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GINA M. PICARD  
Superintendent of Schools

MICHAEL COMELLA, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

### **RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF 2025-H5204**

Relating to Education – Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits

**WHEREAS:** the Chariho Regional School District (“Chariho”) is a tri-town school district comprising Charlestown, Richmond, and Hopkinton. Chariho is the geographically largest regional school district in Rhode Island, spanning a geographic area of 126 square miles; and

**WHEREAS:** The Chariho Regional District School Committee has previously adopted a resolution of its support for full funding of transportation categorical aid funding (2025-H2501) between the state and regional school districts to partially offset the higher transportation costs of the geographically larger regional districts; and

**WHEREAS:** RIGL 16-21.1-1 (Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits – General Purposes) requires Chariho to provide bus transportation to pupils who attend nonpublic nonprofit schools; and

**WHEREAS:** the estimated cost for this service in FY25 is \$902,578.63 on out-of-district transportation, after an estimated credit for non-public offset of \$ 474,896.00 the total cost to Chariho is \$427,682.63 for an average cost of \$ 8,385.93 per student; and

**WHEREAS:** by contrast, the per pupil cost for each pupil being transported within Chariho is only \$ 1,456.00; and

**WHEREAS:** RIGL 16-21.1-8 (Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits – Statewide Transportation System for All Students) requires Chariho to utilize the statewide transportation system to meet this need; and

**WHEREAS:** Chariho employs contracted transportation service through Ocean State Transit, an in-district vendor located 0.8 miles away from the main campus; and

**WHEREAS:** 2025-H5204 would enable Chariho and every other school district to “utilize its own buses or vendors to transport students outside the district, at a lower cost than the statewide school transportation system,” and submit these costs to the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to receive reimbursement from state funds whenever a district can provide transportation outside its community at a lower cost than the statewide transportation system;

**WHEREAS:** 2025-H5204 would promote economic efficiency as the statewide transportation system and school districts compete to lower costs, the original goal of the statewide transportation system;

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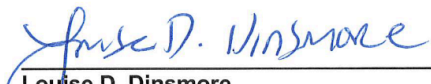
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:** that the Chariho Regional District School Committee

1. Respectfully requests that Chariho is permitted to utilize its own vendor to transport students outside of the district at a lower cost of the statewide transportation system.
2. Respectfully requests that Chariho should be permitted to submit these costs to the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to receive reimbursement from state funds.
3. Seeks the support of all regional School Committees, Town Councils of towns having regional school districts, and legislators representing towns served by regional school districts regarding this matter of mutual interest to the students, schools, and taxpayers of our school districts.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Charlestown Town Council, the Richmond Town Council, the Hopkinton Town Council, and legislators serving the towns of the Chariho Regional School District.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island; the Rhode Island General Assembly; and every RI Municipality, School Committee, and Town Council.

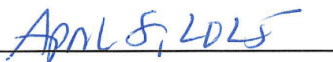
**This RESOLUTION shall take effect upon passage, WHERETO:** The following bear witness:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Louise D. Dinsmore  
CHARIHO School Committee Chairperson

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Angela A. Brasil  
CHARIHO School Committee Clerk

April 8, 2025

Date



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