



Testimony in Support
An Act Relating To Education - The Education Equity And Property Tax Relief Act
April 29, 2025

Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of H5751, which updates the Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act by incorporating Medicaid enrollment as a metric for the student success factor in Rhode Island's education funding formula.

At the Latino Policy Institute (LPI), we center our work on ensuring that public policy is informed by the realities, strengths, and needs of Latino communities in Rhode Island. This bill moves us closer to that vision by ensuring a more accurate and inclusive way to identify high-need students, especially those from working-class, immigrant, and multilingual households.

Rhode Island's Latino students make up nearly 30% of the K-12 population, and many live in families navigating complex socio economic challenges (RI Department of Education, 2023; Kids Count RI, 2024). Medicaid enrollment is a critical and reliable indicator of poverty, especially as school districts phase out reliance on free/reduced lunch forms due to universal meal programs. Including Medicaid in the success factor calculation will ensure that no child falls through the cracks simply because they're undocumented or didn't fill out a specific form.

Moreover, this change aligns with the state's recent efforts to improve data quality and better reflect the economic conditions of our most vulnerable students. It also aligns with the spirit of equity and justice—we cannot close opportunity gaps without resourcing the communities that need it most.

This update is not just a technical fix, it's a reflection of our values. It says that Rhode Island sees our multilingual learners, our immigrant families, and our low-income students not as liabilities, but as future leaders who deserve investment.

We urge your support of H5751 and your continued commitment to funding education in ways that reflect the lived realities of our communities.

Sincerely,
Awilda Reinoso Lopez
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