

April 29, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair  
House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: BILL NUMBER H-6045 – A N A C T RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND PROPERTY TAX RELIEF ACT

Chair Abney and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 6045, which would require all public schools serving grades K–12 to maintain at least one full-time certified school social worker for every 250 students, and provide a \$2 million appropriation in the Fiscal Year 2026 state budget to support this mandate.

The League is extremely supportive of this initiative because it addresses an urgent and growing need in our schools: the mental, emotional, and social well-being of our students. Cities and towns across Rhode Island continue to see the effects of these challenges in our classrooms, and certified school social workers play a vital role in addressing them. These professionals provide essential support, connecting students and families to critical resources and helping to foster healthy, safe, and inclusive learning environments.

We especially commend the sponsor for incorporating designated state funding into this legislation. Providing \$2 million in FY 2026 represents a critical first step toward enabling school districts and municipalities to meet the new staffing requirements. Equally important, we encourage the General Assembly to ensure that this funding not only covers the financial burden of the mandate itself, but that it be sustained and adjusted as needed in future fiscal years to reflect changes in enrollment and personnel costs.

Sustainable state support will allow local communities to plan effectively, avoid shifting the financial burden onto municipal budgets, and maintain consistent staffing levels to support student needs over time. Without this continued financial partnership, even the most well-intentioned mandates risk becoming unfunded and unmanageable at the local level.

Additionally, we appreciate the inclusion of clear statutory language that defines “school social worker” as a certified professional recognized by the Rhode Island Department of Education. This ensures quality and consistency across school districts and affirms the importance of professional qualifications in delivering student support services.

The League and its member communities are eager to work collaboratively with the General Assembly to strengthen support systems for Rhode Island’s youth. For these reasons, we urge your support of H6045 and your ongoing commitment to fully fund and sustain its implementation.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Randy R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Finance Committee