



House Committee on Finance

- **Support FOR H 5981**, Civics Education Funding
- Hearing date: May 15, 2025

Chair Marvin Abney and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Women Voters, I am testifying in support of House Bill H 5981. This legislation would establish a new funding category for civics education and a related fund to provide for the resources necessary to support the effective teaching of civics in our Rhode Island schools.

The League believes civics education is crucial for democracy to flourish. Such education is more important today than ever. Democracy is currently under attack in this country. Many voters and non-voters are feeling powerless and frustrated. Too often they don't understand the workings of government and don't believe their own actions can make a difference. Civics education in our public schools is meant to capture the next generation of voters and educate them as to how to get involved – and why they should.

In 2021, RI legislators passed the *Civics Literacy Act* requiring RI students in grades 8-12 to take a civics class. The semester requirement is the first step to adequately prepare students in this subject matter. However, the final legislation did not include funding for teacher training or new curriculum resources. Without such funding, this requirement poses many new challenges for the teaching of civics education.

RI schools currently lack civics teachers, curriculum materials, and the funding for training. If students are to be actively engaged in our democracy, they need not only an understanding of the history and knowledge of our governmental institutions, but also related experience and skills. And more students from diverse backgrounds need to be included. Currently, the *Civic Literacy Act* is an unfunded mandate. House Bill 5981 would establish the funding required to address these concerns.

Please support this legislative proposal to fund civics education in our RI schools.

Thank you,

*Diana (Donnie) McGee*

Diana (Donnie) McGee, Advocacy Committee Cochair

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