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Rhode Island Works Best When We Say UNION YES.

May 20, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chairperson, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI

RE: Testimony HB6236 - An Act Relating to Education – Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits

Dear Chair Abney and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony on behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, representing more than 80,000 union members and their families across the state. I submit this testimony in opposition to House Bill 6236, as drafted, and offer an amendment related to William M. Davies, Jr. Career and Technical High School ("Davies").

This legislation, as drafted, poses a significant threat to the continued success and accessibility of Davies, our state's flagship career and technical education (CTE) institution. The bill's proposed redistricting of transportation zones would effectively prevent Davies from enrolling and transporting students from key sending districts including Providence, Johnston, East Providence, and Cranston, among others.

Currently, over 125 students from these districts attend Davies. The loss of access to these students would not only damage enrollment but also jeopardize the financial and programmatic stability of the school. While we understand that currently enrolled students and incoming freshmen may be grandfathered in, the long-term consequences of HB6236 poses a serious threat to the future success of the school and most importantly, its students.

We believe these concerns can be addressed with either of the two amendments:

1. Provide a full exemption for Davies from the transportation redistricting provisions of the bill; OR
2. Include a provision allowing Davies to transport students within a 10-mile radius of the school, measured by public highway, following a model successfully used in states like Pennsylvania.

As Rhode Island's flagship state-owned and operated career and technical high school, Davies is not just another high school. It is the only school in Rhode Island offering Precision Manufacturing training, with specialized equipment that no other high school possesses. It also boasts a premier bio-science program and is undergoing a \$50 million facilities upgrade, the first since its 1970 wing construction.

As Rhode Island works to expand access to high-quality, hands-on career and technical education, we should be supporting, not restricting, institutions like Davies. The school serves a statewide mission, and its ability to draw from multiple communities is vital to that purpose and its success. For these reasons, we respectfully request that you either exempt Davies entirely from House Bill 6236 or adopt language that allows a 10-mile transportation radius to preserve its current accessibility and capacity to serve students across the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration, please do not hesitate to call me if you have any further questions 401-751-7100.

Respectfully submitted,

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