



May 22, 2025

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for H-6044 and the proposed amendment to the Onward We Learn Scholarship Act that would much-needed funding for the *Onward We Learn* Scholarship Program. This vital program has played an essential role in helping low-income, first-generation Rhode Island students access and complete higher education. Expanding investment in this initiative is both a moral imperative and a smart economic strategy for our state.

The *Onward We Learn* Scholarship provides not only financial assistance but also the academic support, mentorship, and college readiness services that are proven to boost graduation rates. These services are critical in closing equity gaps and ensuring that all students, regardless of background, can achieve their full potential.

Increasing funding for this program will directly benefit Rhode Island by:

- Expanding access to higher education for underrepresented communities;
- Strengthening our future workforce with well-educated, career-ready graduates;
- Reducing long-term reliance on public assistance by helping students secure gainful employment; and
- Promoting economic mobility and social equity across the state.

The return on investment in education has been well-researched. For every dollar the Rhode Island General Assembly invests in Onward We Learn, the state received \$9.50 in return in terms of taxes paid and benefits saved. I urge you to support increased funding for the *Onward We Learn* Scholarship Program and to continue advocating for policies that promote educational access and opportunity. Doing so will not only provide much-needed financial aid to students, the additional resources will be used to leverage a federal grant (GEAR UP) from the U.S. Department of Education which has a challenging dollar-for-dollar match.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued service to our state.

Sincerely,

*Andrew Bramson*

Andrew Bramson  
President and CEO