



Providence Tour Company
225 Dyer Street, FL 2
Providence, RI 02903

01.31.2026

To Chair Abney and the members of the RI House Committee on Finance –

My name is Bradly VanDerStad, and I am writing on behalf of Providence Tour Company, the Providence-based tour company I founded in 2018 that welcomes thousands of visitors each year who come to Rhode Island specifically to experience our history. I write in strong support of funding for the proposed Rhode Island State History Center through \$45 million of the general obligation bond in Question 6.

From the perspective of those of us working directly in heritage tourism, Rhode Island's history is one of our greatest assets—and currently, much of it is inaccessible. The State Archives are housed in a leased facility on Broad Street with no permanent exhibit space, meaning residents, students, and visitors alike are unable to see some of the most important documents in our state's history. Treasures such as the Gaspee Commission documents (1772), the Battle of Rhode Island map from General Sullivan's 1778 expedition, Rhode Island's Bill of Rights (1789), the Declaration of Independence stone printing (1823), and the Dorr Rebellion map of 1842 cannot be safely or consistently displayed.

Cultural and educational tourism plays a meaningful role in Rhode Island's economy. Visitors who come for history support hotels, restaurants, shops, and small businesses like ours. A dedicated, accessible State History Center would strengthen this ecosystem while also serving Rhode Islanders—especially students and educators—by making our shared history visible, tangible, and relevant.

The proposed facility is not an extravagance; it is a practical investment in education, tourism, and stewardship of Rhode Island's legacy. On behalf of Providence Tour Company, I respectfully urge the House Committee on Finance to support funding for the Rhode Island State History Center.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Bradly J. VanDerStad
Owner, Providence Tour Company