



RHODE ISLAND
HUMANITIES

February 23, 2025

Rep. Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House

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Dear Chair Abney and the members of the House Committee on Finance:

I write today in support of the proposal included in the Governor's budget for the Rhode Island State History Center, funded by \$45 million of the general obligation bond in question 6.

An original colony, Rhode Island is fortunate to have a rich and storied history, and to have played an integral role in the American Revolution.

Unfortunately, Rhode Islanders are not afforded the benefit of a permanent space in which they can experience the state's treasures up close. Instead, they are kept out of sight for preservation purposes. We should be able to have both – and a State History Center with dedicated, safe exhibit space for our archival materials where Rhode Islanders can see them.

Not only would this benefit Rhode Islanders – students on field trips, local historians, residents of our many, diverse communities – but it would serve as a tourism driver and capitalize on what we know is a booming historic tourism industry.

As Executive Director of Rhode Island Humanities, I see how important it is to tell Rhode Island's stories and for everyday people to have access to the original documents that will inspire pride and belonging. As Secretary of the RI250 Commission, I am excited about the possibility of connecting our state's rich historical collections with a State History Center.

As we recognize our nation's semiquincentennial anniversary, the State History Center is an ideal project to leave a lasting legacy on our state.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Francis, PhD