



Letter of Support for the RI State History Center FY2027 budget, Article 6 Question 6

February 11, 2026

To 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, and so many others – but it would serve as a tourism driver and capitalize on what we know is a booming historic tourism industry.

As the founder of the AAPI History Museum in Providence, I have lived the consequences of what happens when history is treated as if it belongs to only a few. Growing up Asian American, I rarely found stories that reflected my ancestors' presence, dignity, or contributions to this nation's building—whether in classrooms, museums, or public memory. That absence is not simply an academic gap; it is a real pain that many families carry, because erasure and minimization make it harder to feel fully seen, fully included, and fully proud of who we are and what our communities have given to this country.

Creating the AAPI History Museum has shown me the power of a permanent, public place where history is accessible, tangible, and told with accuracy and respect. Visitors—especially students—light up when they finally see themselves in the story of where they live. A Rhode Island State History Center can do that for all Rhode Islanders: it can ensure our state's history is not hidden away, not told hesitantly, and not reduced to a narrow version of the past. Rhode Island's history includes Asian American history and so many other histories that have too often been left out; a State History Center is a necessary investment in telling our full story truthfully and proudly.

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

Respectfully,

Jeannie W. Salomon
Founder & Executive Director, AAPI History Museum