

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

We write today as co-chairs of the Archives Working Group 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.

The Archives Working Group includes diverse representation from education and higher education sectors, leading historians and historical preservationists, members of the building and architecture industries, philanthropic groups, and community members. Since the Archives Working Group was convened by Secretary Amore in June of 2023, we as co-chairs and our full group have provided direction and feedback to the Department of State team on various project proposals.

It is clear to us that the current Rhode Island State History Center proposal addresses prior concerns on affordability while maintaining many of the educational and economic benefits.

An original colony, Rhode Island is fortunate to have a rich and storied history, and Rhode Islanders deserve a permanent space in which they can experience the State's treasures up close. Students who will visit the State History Center on field trips will see their classroom lessons come alive.

Not only would this benefit Rhode Islanders, but it would serve as a tourism driver and capitalize on what we know is a booming historic tourism industry. Especially when paired with the State House tour program, the State History Center will be a primary attraction in Rhode Island.

Finally, this project will create jobs and support the local construction industry. The investment of \$45 million is estimated to generate \$74 million in total in-state spending and create 428 part-time and full-time jobs over the 2 years of construction.

As we recognize our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the State History Center is an ideal project to invest in our state's economy and to leave a lasting legacy for Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Kerrie Bennett

Robert A. Walsh, Jr.

Co-chairs, Archives Working Group