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Rhode Island Works Best When We Say **UNION YES.**

February 11, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney  
 Chair, House Committee on Finance  
 Rhode Island State House  
 Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of H 7127 - Article 6: Capital Development Program – Question 1 Higher Education Facilities, and Article 7: Sections 4 and 5 – Hope Scholarship

Dear Chair Abney and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, representing more than 80,000 union members and their families across the state, I am proud to submit this testimony in support of Article 6 – Question 1 Higher Education Facilities and Article 7 – Sections 4 and 5 of House Bill 7127. The Rhode Island AFL-CIO believes that investing in higher education, especially our public institutions, is an investment in the state’s economic success. Rhode Island’s future depends on a highly educated and skilled workforce.

Question 1 calls for a general obligation bond in the amount of \$215,000,000 to fund the construction of new facilities at all three public higher education institutions (URI, RIC, and CCRI). Students deserve to learn in new, state-of-the-art facilities. Teachers deserve to work in an environment that has the resources required to help students succeed, while preparing them for life after graduation. Investing in workforce readiness at our three public universities is critical to keep our state moving forward.

The proposal to fund the construction of new workforce and career readiness facilities at the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island, represents thousands of good, union jobs while making a smart investment in both students and employers. Rhode Island’s economy depends on a pipeline of skilled, job-ready workers, particularly in the skilled trades and technical fields that power our state’s economic growth. As a federation of labor unions, we see every day the urgent need for more Rhode Islanders trained in the practical, hands-on skills that keep our industries competitive.

Additionally, the Rhode Island Hope Scholarship has been a success since its launch in 2023. Retention rates have increased and so has the four-year graduation rate. Reducing the economic barriers to completing a college degree is not only a moral good, but it makes sense economically for Rhode Island. The Scholarship was designed to address state-level labor shortages while ensuring local economic retention. The program incentivizes graduates to remain in Rhode Island and enter "high-need" professions in fields such as healthcare, education, and technological innovation.

By making the Rhode Island Hope Scholarship permanent, we are making a lasting investment in the needs of Rhode Islanders for their personal enrichment and for our workforce. The value of this investment cannot be understated.

Patrick Crowley [President](#) • Karen Hazard [Secretary-Treasurer](#)  
 Cheryl Masciarelli [Office Manager](#) • Autumn Guillotte [Political Director](#) • Erica Hammond [Legislative Director](#)





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For these reasons, the Rhode Island AFL-CIO urges the committee to support Article 6 – Question 1 and Article 7 – Sections 4 and 5 of House Bill 7127. Thank you for your time and consideration, along with the opportunity to provide written testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions 401-751-7100.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Autumn Guillotte".

Autumn Guillotte  
Political Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO

