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February 11, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chairman
House Committee on Finance
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: HB 7127--Article 6, Section 6--Question 1 Higher Education Facilities

Dear Chairman Abney,

I write to express my strong support for Question 1 that will allocate \$215,000,000 to Rhode Island's institutions of higher education.

Our state continues to experience critical workforce shortages—particularly in skilled trades, construction, and healthcare—exacerbated by a rapidly aging workforce. To address this crisis, it is imperative we build upon the accomplishments of our institutions of higher education and support the growth of programs that equip the next generation with skills to succeed in these high-demand fields. Fully funding Question 1 will further the missions of these institutions by enabling them to:

- Advance skills training. *The Workforce Innovation Center at the Community College of Rhode Island* will provide, industry-aligned training labs and program space; expand apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship pipelines; and ensure that more Rhode Islanders graduate with the in-demand credentials employers are seeking. It will also strengthen the collaboration between industry and education—something Rhode Island must do to remain competitive regionally and nationally.
- Address the health care crisis. *The Integrated Health Building at the University of Rhode Island* will support interdisciplinary education with the College of Health Sciences and Pharmacy, along with housing the College of Nursing. This investment will advance healthcare training and workforce development, providing the next generation of health care workers with the skills to succeed in the health sector.
- Expand access to academic resources. Renovations to the *Adams Library at Rhode Island College* will provide students with a modern student success and career readiness center for academic advising, employer engagement, and learning resources in one central location.

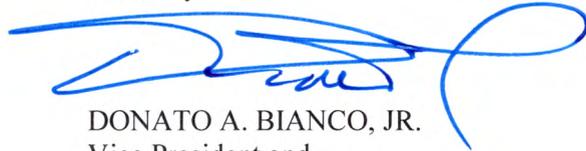
Rhode Island's state institutions of higher education exemplify a shared commitment to providing students with access to cutting-edge research, hands-on learning opportunities, and high-quality teaching. From the University of Rhode Island's achievement of the prestigious R1 Carnegie Classification to Rhode Island College's launch of the Institute for Cybersecurity &

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Emerging Technologies, we are witnessing a powerful transformation of these institutions into modern academic centers—driven by forward-thinking leadership, whose efforts are reshaping the schools to meet the demands of the future.

It is imperative the state continues to maintain this momentum by investing in these institutions. Such an investment supports the students currently enrolled, those yet to come, and the long-term economic strength and competitiveness of the state. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the future of higher education in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Donato A. Bianco, Jr.', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

DONATO A. BIANCO, JR.
Vice President and
New England Regional Manager

cc: Members of the House Committee on Finance
The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker of the House
Sharon Reynolds Ferland, House Fiscal Advisor