



April 28, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7163

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the National Education Association Rhode Island (NEARI) and our 12,000 members, I write to express our strong support for H 7163, legislation that would prohibit participation in the federal school voucher tax credit program for contributions to scholarship-granting organizations unless both the General Assembly and the Governor expressly approve such participation. This bill represents NEARI's number one legislative priority this session.

The federal school voucher tax credit, included in the recent federal omnibus legislation known as the "Trump Big Beautiful Bill," is an untested and poorly constructed policy. It was inserted into a sweeping federal package with limited scrutiny and leaves significant ambiguity regarding implementation, oversight, and long-term fiscal impact. Rhode Island should not enter into such a program without deliberate, transparent consideration by its elected leaders.

H 7163 establishes a clear and necessary safeguard. By requiring affirmative approval from both the legislature and the Governor, this bill ensures that any decision to participate in this federal program is made thoughtfully, with full awareness of the potential consequences for our state's students, schools, and taxpayers. It reinforces the principle that major policy shifts, particularly those involving public education funding, must not occur by default or through administrative action alone.

The risks associated with voucher-style programs are well documented across the country. In numerous states, these programs have driven up state spending beyond initial projections while failing to produce meaningful improvements in student outcomes. Instead of strengthening public education systems that serve the vast majority of students, voucher programs often divert critical resources away from neighborhood public schools.

For Rhode Island, the stakes are especially high. The ambiguity within the federal tax credit program raises serious concerns about unintended consequences, including the potential loss or redirection of federal funding that our public schools rely on. At a time when districts are already facing financial pressures and working to address student needs, the state cannot afford to expose its education system to such uncertainty.

Importantly, this legislation does not permanently foreclose participation in the program. Rather, it ensures that any such decision is made with intention, transparency, and accountability. It preserves the authority of Rhode Island's elected officials to evaluate the program thoroughly and determine whether it aligns with the state's educational values and fiscal responsibilities.

By passing H 7163, the General Assembly will protect public education funding, uphold responsible governance, and ensure that any major policy decision of this magnitude receives the scrutiny it deserves.

NEARI respectfully urges your support for this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alexander Lucini". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Alexander Lucini
Government Relations Director, NEARI