

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
Chairman, House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: OPPOSITION to 2026 -- H 7163, AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- FOUNDATION  
LEVEL SCHOOL SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of ACCESS, we respectfully oppose H7163.

The students we serve are among the most vulnerable in Rhode Island—children with learning differences and specialized needs whose success depends on access to consistent, individualized support.

For these families, timing matters. Delays matter. Missed opportunities matter.

H7163 creates a very real risk that Rhode Island will not be positioned to participate in the federal SGO program when it becomes available.

If that happens, something simple—but significant—will occur:

Donations made by Rhode Islanders will go to support students in other states instead of supporting children here at home.

For the families we work with, that is not an abstract policy concern—it is the difference between whether a child receives needed support or goes without.

Story: We work with families who have already stretched every available resource to secure the therapies and supports their children need.

When additional help is available—even modestly—it can determine whether progress continues or stalls.

ACCESS serves students attending: Three students currently enrolled at School One

Population served: We have a student population of up to 100 students and prepare all of them for college, including some who arrive with no thought of going to college. School One is also a RIDE-certified Nonpublic Special Education school.

To highlight the importance of ACCESS funding, when a recent ACCESS recipient enrolled at School One, they stated they were not going to college. Four years later, they graduated with the highest honors that School One confers and are now studying calculus and Mandarin Chinese at Mount Holyoke. They are the first in their family to attend college. ACCESS made this possible and has helped other students to consider and pursue similar dreams. Fundamentally, ACCESS helps to open school doors to Rhode Island students whose family's financial situation might otherwise deprive them of such an opportunity.

Rhode Island should not put itself in a position where its own children—especially those with the greatest needs—are left behind while resources flow elsewhere.

We respectfully urge you to oppose H7163.

Sincerely,

Christopher Hayes

Head of School, School One

ACCESS President