

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Chair Marvin Abney  
Chair, House Finance Committee  
RI State House

Re: Support for H7456 School Social Workers

Dear Chair:

We write in strong **support** of **H7456**, legislation to strengthen access to school social workers for Rhode Island students.

RIPIN is a statewide nonprofit that has helped Rhode Islanders achieve their education goals since 1991. RIPIN was founded by parents of children with disabilities, and for 35 years we have served as Rhode Island's federally designated Parent Training and Information Center (PTIC) for special education.

School social workers are essential members of the educational team. They help remove non-academic barriers to learning by addressing students' mental health needs, supporting positive behavior, improving attendance and engagement, and connecting families to community-based resources—so that students are ready and able to learn.

On a daily basis, school social workers provide counseling and brief interventions, teach coping and social-emotional skills, and consult with teachers and administrators on effective, trauma-informed strategies. This support can reduce classroom disruptions, strengthen school climate, and keep students connected to instruction.

School social workers also play a critical role in crisis response—supporting students after a death, hospitalization, homelessness, or other traumatic events; coordinating risk assessment and safety planning; and helping schools respond in ways that are supportive, coordinated, and developmentally appropriate.

Because they are trained to work across home, school, and community systems, school social workers help families navigate complex challenges and access supports such as outpatient counseling, housing and food resources, and youth-serving programs. They also contribute to special education and Section 504 processes by helping schools understand how disability, trauma, and environmental stressors affect learning and participation.

RIPIN respectfully urges the House Finance Committee to support **H7456** and take favorable action to ensure schools have the social work capacity needed to meet students' needs.

/s/  
Sincerely,

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