



April 27, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney

House Finance Committee

82 Smith Street

Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support H-7501- A N A C T RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME to invest \$ 100,000 in a targeted investment in out-of-schooltime (OST) staff training ,trusted community spaces where young people already gather outside the school day.

These programs are uniquely positioned to support youth well-being through relationships, mentoring,

and prevention-based supports, but many are underincreasing strain due to reductions in federal

education and student supportfunding.

Dear Chairman Abney:

We the undersigned organizations write collectively to share our strong support for Senate Bill H-7501 which would invest \$100,000 to \$100,000 in OST funding to support building the capacity of the staff working in out of school time programs to increase prevention, connection, and community based support. This funding will provide staff training in the following areas strengthening the system of support currently in place that serves thousands of RI children/youth attending K-12 schools. The targeted training includes:

- Youth Mental Health First Aid training
- Peer support groups and mentoring programs
- Youth-led mental health initiatives

- Social-emotional learning materials and
- curricula
- Wellness projects, workshops, and creative
- programming
- Community-informed approaches that
- promote prevention and connection to care

Rhode Island's young learners spend more than 80% of their time outside of school, yet we all know that meeting their needs does not end when the last school bell rings. That is why Rhode Island's quality OSTL programs are so critical. They keep kids safe, inspire learning, and give working parents peace of mind that their children are engaged and cared for while parents are at work. Through OSTL learning opportunities kids discover who they are, what they love to do, make smart choices, and avoid risky behaviors.

A strong body of research has found that OSTL programs help young people develop social emotional skills, and get support for managing their feelings of being unsafe and experiencing bullying each day . Afterschool and OSTL programs also promote health and wellness through robust family engagement strategies.

Sincerely,

Maryclaire Knight 142 Miller Avenue Providence, RI 02905

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