



April 28, 2026

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

RE: H 7581

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 7581, which would establish a dedicated categorical funding stream for civics education and create a statewide civics education fund administered through the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

This legislation represents a thoughtful and necessary investment in the civic development of Rhode Island's students. At a time when civic knowledge, media literacy, and democratic engagement are more important than ever, our schools must be equipped with the resources and support necessary to prepare students to be informed, active participants in their communities and in our democracy.

H 7581 takes an important step by ensuring that civics education is not left to uneven implementation or limited local capacity. By creating a dedicated funding category, the bill recognizes that high-quality civics instruction requires intentional investment. The structure of the fund, allocating resources based on district need, including student population, socioeconomic factors, and multilingual learner populations, helps ensure that resources are distributed equitably and where they are most needed.

The bill's emphasis on educator support is particularly critical. By dedicating a significant portion of funding to professional development, the legislation acknowledges that effective civics instruction depends on well-prepared educators. Investments in culturally responsive teaching, media literacy, and project-based learning will strengthen classroom practice and better engage students in meaningful civic experiences.

Finally, the bill's provision to increase funding in future years demonstrates a long-term commitment to sustaining and expanding civics education across the state. This is not a one-time investment, but a strategic effort to build a stronger, more informed citizenry over time.

For these reasons, NEARI strongly urges passage of H 7581. This legislation will provide the resources, structure, and accountability necessary to ensure that every student in Rhode Island has access to high-quality civics education and the opportunity to become an engaged and informed member of our democracy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Alexander Lucini'.

Alexander Lucini
Government Relations Director, NEARI