

April 28, 2026

Honorable Marvin Abney, Chair
House Committee on Finance

RE: H7581 - An Act Relating to Education - The Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Ariana M. Botelho, an alumni of William E. Tolman High School's graduating class of 2018. I am here today to urge you to support the passage of Bill H7581.

When the Civic Literacy Act was passed in 2021, it came with a promise for a better civics education, but without the \$1 million categorical fund proposed in this legislation, that promise remains out of reach for many schools. In my experience, civics is most impactful when it isn't just about reading a textbook but also about being involved in our communities. This bill provides \$600,000 specifically for student-led projects and the resources needed to make them happen.

Throughout my time at William E. Tolman High School I was afforded the opportunity to receive civics education in the classroom and engage in my community through an internship. Having the opportunity to engage in my community and not just receiving in classroom civics education is what provided me the knowledge and experience necessary for being a competitive citizen in the workforce. As a result of receiving both in the classroom civics education and engaging in my community through an internship, I was fortunate to secure and be successful in a position at a local law office post-graduation.

Without this funding, schools like William E. Tolman High School and more across Rhode Island may not have the extra budget for project materials or travel to allow students to engage in projects in their community. Current high school students aren't just the leaders of tomorrow; they are members of our communities today. It is important to provide the necessary tools and funding to make sure these student's teachers can best guide them so they can become competitive members in the workforce and continue to engage in our Rhode Island communities in meaningful ways. Please support this bill to ensure that generations to come are ready to lead.

Sincerely,



Ariana Botelho
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