



Testimony in Support of H7581 - Civics Education

April 28, 2026

To: House Finance Committee

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Charter Public Schools, I am writing in support of additional funding to strengthen civic learning and student-led work across Rhode Island schools.

For many charter public schools, civic engagement and social justice are central to their mission and culture. Civics is not just taught—it is practiced. Earlier this month, I attended a debate with Pawtucket mayoral candidates facilitated by 5th graders at the International Charter School. Students researched key issues, developed questions, and led a thoughtful conversation about the city's future.

In recent weeks, students from Segue Institute for Learning toured the State House and testified in support of school waste and recycling legislation. Earlier in session, high school students from The Greene School testified in opposition to the proposed charter public school moratorium. In each case, students analyzed policy, built arguments, and used their voices to advocate for change.

Students are also deeply engaged in their communities. At TAPA, students helped organize a walkout in response to ICE actions. At The Compass School, students made sandwiches to support neighbors affected by SNAP benefit cuts. These examples reflect a broader commitment across our schools to connecting learning with real-world impact.

This work does not happen by accident. It requires intentional design, skilled educators, and the time and resources to do it well. Educators and school leaders create the foundation that allows students to develop a sense of belonging and purpose—and then teachers empower students to find their voice and their influence in their community.

Additional funding will expand opportunities for student-led projects and support professional learning so educators can effectively guide civic dialogue, critical thinking, and community leadership.

We all benefit when young people know how to participate, listen, and lead.



I urge you to support H7581 and provide the resources needed to advance student-led civics projects and fulfill the promise of the 2021 Civic Literacy Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren K. B. Matlach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren K. B. Matlach

Deputy Director

Rhode Island League of Charter Public Schools