



*Defending Democracy. Empowering Voters.*

**LWVRI Written Testimony Submitted in Support of H 7581**

**Honorable Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee:**

I am writing on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island to express our strong support for **H 7581**, which establishes a dedicated categorical fund for civics education in our state.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization committed to empowering voters and defending democracy. We believe that a strong democracy depends on an informed, engaged, and prepared citizenry—and that begins with high-quality civic education for all students.

This legislation represents an important and timely investment. By creating a dedicated \$1 million fund for civics education, Rhode Island can ensure that access to meaningful civic learning is not determined by zip code. The bill's emphasis on distributing funds based on student population size, socioeconomic status, multilingual learners, and other indicators of need reflects a clear commitment to equity and ensures that all students, not just those in well-resourced districts, can benefit from high-quality civics instruction.

Equally important, this bill supports a shift from rote memorization to applied, experiential civic learning. Through student-led civics projects, media literacy, and project-based learning, students gain essential real-world skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, consensus-building, and public speaking. These are not only the foundations of effective civic participation, but also of success in college, careers, and a rapidly evolving society.

The League also strongly supports the bill's investment in educator capacity. By dedicating substantial funding to professional development, the legislation recognizes that teachers are central to effective civic education and must be equipped with the tools, training, and support necessary to engage students in meaningful learning experiences.

Finally, we commend the bill's emphasis on accountability and continuous improvement. The role of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in assessing effectiveness—and its requirement to incorporate input from teachers, parents, and communities—creates a vital feedback loop. This ensures that the fund is not simply a one-time investment, but part of an ongoing, responsive system that evolves to meet student and community needs.

For the League of Women Voters, civic education is foundational to our mission. When students learn how government works, how to evaluate information, and how to engage constructively in their communities, they are better prepared to become lifelong, informed participants in our democracy.

We urge you to support H 7581 and take this important step toward ensuring that every child in Rhode Island has the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be an engaged and effective citizen.

Thank you for your consideration.

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