



401-787-3389



[janie@stophthewaitri.org](mailto:janie@stophthewaitri.org)



1290 Westminister St, Unit 100,  
Providence RI 02909



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## House Committee on Finance

Rhode Island General Assembly  
State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairperson Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Janie Segui Rodriguez, and I am the Founder and CEO of Stop The Wait RI, a parent-led nonprofit organization that supports families in navigating the public school system and elevating their voices in shaping the education landscape. I write today in strong support of House Bill H7581.

We live in an era of profound polarization, where misinformation spreads faster than truth and civic trust is eroding at every level of government. If we do not intentionally equip our children, from an early age, with the tools to think critically, engage respectfully across difference, and understand how democracy actually works, we risk handing them a system they neither trust nor know how to repair.

Civic education is not a luxury or an elective; it is the foundational investment that determines whether the next generation becomes passive bystanders or active keepers of democracy. Our children deserve to grow up knowing that their voice matters, that government is something they participate in, not something that merely happens to them, and that the health of our communities depends on their informed, courageous engagement. Passing H7581 is one concrete, meaningful step toward making that promise real for every child in Rhode Island, regardless of their zip code.

Our state needs a dedicated \$1 million categorical fund to ensure equitable civic education. By prioritizing student population size, socioeconomic status, and various dimensions of need, RIDE can ensure that funding is distributed equitably and that students of all backgrounds, not just those in districts that already have the most resources, can afford high-quality civics.

I also want to highlight the importance of the RI Civic Readiness Task Force. This bill ensures a continuous feedback loop where parents, students, and community advocates have a formalized role in advising the state. This isn't just about writing a check; it's about building an annual cycle of accountability and community-led improvement. Let's make sure every child in Rhode Island has the opportunity to become a lifelong, engaged citizen.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Sincerely,

Janie Segui Rodriguez  
Founder & CEO