

## Testimony in Support of H 7581—An Act Relating to Education—The Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act

### Position: Support

Common Cause Rhode Island supports H 7581, a bill that would create a dedicated funding stream for civics education in Rhode Island. The General Assembly had the wisdom in 2021 to make civics education proficiency a requirement for high school graduation in our state. Now the legislature must fund civics education to make that requirement a reality for all students in our state.

The mission of Common Cause is to “uphold the core values of American democracy.” We believe that civics education and democracy are inextricably linked. The public education system in the United States was created for the purpose of developing citizens who could participate in our new democracy. In a period of intense polarization and voter dissatisfaction with our democracy, there is no better investment than civics education.

The fund proposed in this legislation supports action civics—a method of teaching through doing. Students will learn not just how our democracy works, but how to navigate our democracy by engaging government through collaborative problem-solving in their communities.

The appropriation in this legislation will be allocated based on the needs of the district. This is critical to making sure that resources end up in districts that need the additional financial support to offer civics education to their students. We need all Rhode Islanders to participate in our democracy and that starts by making sure all Rhode Island students have access to civics education.

Civics education is the foundation of a lifetime of democratic participation. Research indicates that when young people receive civic education, they are more likely to be civically engaged.<sup>1</sup> And we know that once young people participate, particularly by voting, they are more likely to vote in the future.<sup>2</sup>

H 7581 is an investment in the future of our democracy in Rhode Island. We urge the House Committee on Finance to support that investment.

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<sup>1</sup> See: [https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2020-01/all\\_together\\_now\\_commission\\_report\\_2013.pdf](https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2020-01/all_together_now_commission_report_2013.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/abs/becoming-a-habitual-voter-inertia-resources-and-growth-in-young-adulthood/9EA1F561496D714346491B25B0D52239>

