

April 27, 2026

Dear Chair Marvin L. Abney and Members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Kamlyn Keith, and I am a community member living in North Kingstown, RI. I am writing to strongly support **H7581**.

In recent years, I've seen firsthand how the 2021 mandate is a grand and critical undertaking that, now more than ever, requires more than just a directive; it requires a sustainable funding stream. Currently, over 50% of Rhode Island teachers lack access to specialized civics professional development. This bill changes that by allocating \$600,000 for educator stipends and substitute coverage around professional development and curriculum implementation. I believe that civic education is integral to the mission of public schools because it prepares students with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to be fully engaged in their communities and in the governance of this nation upon their eligibility to vote and run for office. Civic education integrates many of the other core content areas together in a practical way, supporting students as whole learners and helping them to understand the connections and real world application of what they learn in school.

From a personal perspective, until a few years ago I worked at the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and aspects of my role included coordinating initiatives in support of civic education. While the experiences that I reference in this letter were gained during my fifteen years' service at the Department, I write this letter as a private citizen with no recent connection to the Department or any State agency. I saw firsthand through interactions with teachers and students how civics projects engaged students in their learning and in caring about their communities. Students' enthusiasm was palpable, and the difference they made in their communities through experiential civic learning projects was a matter of pride in themselves and their schools. Social studies and civics teachers are extremely dedicated people who deserve to be supported to the same level as mathematics, literacy, and science teachers because what they teach is not only knowledge of "how" our government functions, but the reason "why" we all work together to support education in the first place: for the current and future success and well-being of our communities and our country.

This legislation is built on a strong foundation and precedence for state-level support of civic education. Through the early 2000s, the General Assembly had earmarked funding related to the Permanent Legislative Commission on Civic Education to support civic education. During the years the funding was available, I recall the teachers who benefited from it expressing sincere appreciation for the much-needed attention and support coming from the state level. The beauty of this current legislation is that the civic education funding will be able to meaningfully impact all districts and support access to high quality curricula, experiential learning programs, and professional development for educators.

What makes this legislation particularly strong is its sustainability. The fund provides consistent funding year over year, allowing districts and department leads to plan curricula with confidence, knowing they'll be properly supported. Further, the \$400,000 set aside for RIDE ensures there is actual oversight and accountability to track our progress and identify which districts still need help. We cannot ask teachers to fulfill this mandate without the professional support they deserve. I urge a favorable vote.

Best regards,

Kamlyn Keith