

House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
Via email to: HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

April 28, 2026

RE: Support of House Bill 7581

Dear Chairperson Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Perri Leviss and I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Director of the Public Administration Program at Rhode Island College. I am also a member of the *RI Civic Learning Coalition* and a regional board member of the national non-profit *Generation Citizen*, which provides civics education and training to teachers and students across our country.

I support House Bill 7581 because as an educator, I've seen firsthand how the 2021 civic education 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.

When I teach American Government, I am often amazed how the inequities in k-12 civic education translate into such varied competencies in our Rhode Island College students. Some students in my classroom deeply understand the history of our country and how this has implications for the leadership and decisions today, and others do not. This impacts the learning of these students, but also what types of citizens and people who they become.

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 educators to fulfill this mandate without the professional support they deserve. I urge a favorable vote.

Sincerely,



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(RI House District 67)