

RICJ

Rhode Island
for Community
& Justice
FIGHTING BIAS, BIGOTRY, AND RACISM.
PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING.

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Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Committee on Finance
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903
April 24, 2026

SUPPORT for S2233 / H7581 – Equity and Accountability in Civics

Dear Chair Abney, and Members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Rose Albert, and I am the Executive Director at Rhode Island for Community and Justice (RICJ) in Providence. I am writing to advocate for the passage of S2233 and H7581.

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 in those districts that already have the most resources, can afford high-quality civics. By moving beyond memorization to applied experiential learning, this funding equips our students with durable, real-world college and career skills, such as consensus building, collaborative problem solving, media literacy, and public speaking, fostering the leadership and resilience necessary to navigate a complex workforce and a diverse, rapidly developing society.

Through our work at RICJ, we consistently see how vital civic engagement is to the strength of our communities, especially for the youth. Many youth in Rhode Island are not heavily involved in local decision-making, leaving their voices often missing from conversations that directly impact them. Programs like RICJ's Youth Action Council have helped bridge this gap by giving young people the tools, confidence, and opportunity to engage with community issues. When youth are involved, they learn to advocate for themselves and others, and they begin to see that their voices matter and that they are heard. Expanding access to civic education would ensure that more youth across the state have the same opportunities and access as those connected to organizations like RICJ. 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. It's about building an annual cycle of accountability and community-led improvement. Let's make sure every child in Rhode Island has the same opportunity to become a lifelong, engaged citizen.

Sincerely,
Rose Albert
Rhode Island for Community & Justice
271 North Main Street, Providence, RI 02903