

ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

**TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7581,
AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE EDUCATION EQUITY AND
PROPERTY TAX RELIEF ACT
April 28, 2026**

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this legislation which would create a new fund for the effective instruction of civics education in every school district. This fund would support comprehensive teacher professional and curriculum development, student-led civic projects, community partnerships, and program evaluation.

A robust civics education teaches students how to meaningfully engage in our democracy. Civics education is necessary to ensure the next generation understands their rights, responsibilities, and role in a democratic society. Its importance – indeed, necessity – seems to us to be clearer than ever from the state of electoral discourse in our country these days.

This proposed fund would serve an important purpose especially when one considers the disparities and gaps in the current civic education programs in Rhode Island. According to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, in 2022, 46% of Rhode Island teachers and only 21% of administrators said their district had standalone civics courses. Even more disconcerting, only 12% of teachers and 10% of administrators said there was an attempt to integrate civics education across multiple disciplines.¹

Creating this fund will enable school districts with limited funding to establish or strengthen civics programs and ensure that all Rhode Island students – regardless of zip code – have access to the knowledge they need to be informed and engaged Rhode Islanders. The benefits that this type of education will provide in the long term are incalculable.

Thank you for considering our views.

¹ https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2022-09/state_civiceducaiton_RI-report_v2.pdf