



194 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02908-4914
 Telephone: (401) 751-7100 Fax: (401) 331-8533
www.RhodeIslandAFLCIO.org • info@RIAFLCIO.com

Rhode Island Works Best When We Say UNION YES.

April 28, 2026

Chairman Marvin L. Abney
 House Committee on Finance
 Rhode Island State House
 Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H7582 – An Act Relating to Education – Health and Safety of Pupils

Dear Chairman Abney and the Members of the House Committee on Finance,

On behalf of the 80,000 members of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO and our affiliated local unions, I write in support of House Bill 7582, introduced by Representative Cotter, relating to the health and safety of pupils through improved indoor air quality in Rhode Island schools.

Indoor air quality in our schools sits at the intersection of worker health, student well-being, and investment in our public infrastructure. Our members are not only the skilled tradespeople who design, install, and maintain school building systems, they are also the educators, school staff, healthcare workers, and parents who see firsthand the impact that unhealthy environments have on young people every day.

Rhode Island’s school buildings are among the oldest in the country, with many facilities far exceeding their intended lifespan. Too many classrooms lack adequate ventilation and modern HVAC systems, exposing students and school employees to poor indoor air quality caused by mold, insufficient filtration, and airborne pollutants. These conditions are unsafe and impact both learning and working conditions.

Poor indoor air quality has real consequences. It contributes to increased absenteeism, worsens chronic conditions like asthma, and negatively impacts student concentration and academic performance. It creates an unhealthy workplace that can lead to long-term health concerns and lost instructional time for educators and school staff. Ensuring clean air in schools is a basic workplace safety issue as much as it is an educational priority.

House Bill 7582 offers a practical and achievable framework to address these challenges. By establishing health-based indoor air quality guidelines through the Department of Health, encouraging the use of improved filtration standards, and integrating ventilation assessments into existing school facility inspections, this legislation creates a consistent, statewide approach to monitoring and improving air quality.

Importantly, this bill also represents a smart investment in Rhode Island’s workforce. Modernizing HVAC systems and improving building ventilation will require skilled, trained workers, creating opportunities for family-sustaining jobs in the building trades while strengthening our state’s infrastructure. This is exactly the kind of policy that supports both economic growth and public health.

For these reasons, the Rhode Island AFL-CIO urges your support for House Bill 7582.

Respectfully submitted,

Erica A. Hammond
 Legislative Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO

