



State of Rhode Island
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminister Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner

May 8, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2026 H-7582 - AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) appreciates the intent of House Bill 7582 to improve indoor air quality (IAQ) in school facilities and to promote safe and healthy learning environments for all students and staff. While this letter is not intended as a position in support of or opposition to the bill, we respectfully offer the following comments and recommendations to ensure the bill is feasible to implement, aligned with existing statute, and adequately resourced.

RIDE is amicable to expanding the statewide facility needs survey to include inspections and evaluations of indoor air quality as required under R.I. Gen Laws § 16-105-3 in future evaluations and providing a report on best practices by June 30, 2027. However, the bill as drafted currently requires the June 30, 2027, report to include data that will not be collected until 2031. To address this issue, RIDE recommends removing the relevant data requirement (page 3, line 31).

Additionally, the bill designates RIDE as the point of contact for IAQ-related issues at local education agencies (LEAs). Under R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-2-9, school committees are responsible for the operation, maintenance, and control of school facilities. As such, LEAs are best positioned to respond to and address IAQ concerns at the local level. To preserve the intent of this language, RIDE recommends that each LEA designate an IAQ point of contact and make that information publicly available (e.g., on their respective websites). RIDE's role should remain focused on guidance, data collection, and reporting, rather than operational response. The Department further recommends including clarifying language that nothing in this section alters the authority of local school committees over the operation and maintenance of school facilities.

RIDE recommends that the proposed five (5) percent housing aid incentive be included, as it would be necessary to support indoor air quality improvements if this legislation requires LEAs to undertake improvements to HVAC systems or implement additional monitoring and reporting practices. Without this incentive, these legislative changes would become an unfunded mandate.

Lastly, RIDE notes that R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-21-3 governs standards for school buildings. To avoid duplication or inconsistency, any new IAQ-related requirements should be aligned with, or incorporated into, existing statutory and regulatory frameworks for school facilities.

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RIDE appreciates the Committee's attention to this important issue and stands ready to work collaboratively to ensure that any enacted requirements are clear, aligned, and able to be implemented for all local education agencies. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Dr. Mario Carreño
Chief Operations Officer
Rhode Island Department of Education

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance
The Honorable Megan L. Cotter
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House