

April 28, 2026

Testimony from Karen Reynolds **in support of** H7318, H7681, H7682, and H8476

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

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Karen Reynolds, and I live in Richmond, Rhode Island. I am a member of the Chariho Regional School District School Committee, and I have one child currently enrolled at Chariho Middle School. I also teach in the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District. I care deeply about public education—not only for my own child, but for all students. Our regional school districts play a vital role in strengthening our communities as a whole.

I am writing in support of several pieces of legislation that would provide meaningful and timely assistance to regional school districts such as Chariho and Exeter-West Greenwich. **H7318** strengthens the regionalization bonus, recognizing the efficiencies and shared responsibilities that regional districts provide. **H7681** ensures that the state fully funds transportation aid, one of the most significant and unavoidable costs for regional districts. **H7682** would allow Chariho and Exeter-West Greenwich greater flexibility to pursue more cost-effective transportation solutions while still receiving reimbursement.

H8476 delivers critical, targeted relief to the Town of Richmond, helping to offset recent reductions in state aid to the school district. Both the Richmond Town Council and the Chariho Regional School Committee have formally submitted resolutions requesting the restoration of \$331,064 in state aid.

The Chariho Regional School District spans over 126 square miles, making it the largest regional district in the state and the only one consisting of three towns formed by state legislation. Our district includes three elementary

schools, one middle school, one high school, one career and technical center, and one alternative learning academy. These schools provide valuable educational opportunities not only to resident students but also to those who choose to attend from outside the district.

Transportation is essential to our regional model and is the safest way to ensure students arrive at school on time each day. While the state funding formula includes categorical transportation aid, this funding is not always fully provided, and the timeline for developing school budgets does not align with the state budget process. H7681 would address this issue by mandating full funding of categorical transportation aid.

Additionally, while other districts cover transportation costs for their students attending Chariho, our district bears the cost of transporting students to other districts and to non-public schools within our region. As these costs approach \$1 million, increased flexibility in funding this category of transportation is essential. Expanding the pool of eligible transportation providers beyond the current state system could improve efficiency and reduce costs. Notably, our current contracted provider is located just one mile from the main campus.

I also strongly support **H7318**, which would increase the regionalization bonus to 6% of the state's share of foundation education aid. Unlike the current version, this increase would be ongoing and without an expiration date. Regionalization is one of our district's greatest strengths, and Chariho serves as a strong example of how collaboration across rural communities can produce positive outcomes.

These proposed amendments to the **Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act** would further its intended purpose and benefit both students and residents. Likewise, the amendment to the **Act Relating to the Transportation of School Pupils Beyond City and Town Limits** would provide school administrators and taxpayers with the flexibility to secure effective transportation solutions at a lower cost.

These investments and increased flexibility from the state would have a meaningful and positive impact on our students and communities. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of these important measures.

Sincerely,
Karen Reynolds
Richmond RI