



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT
AFL - CIO

To: House Finance Committee
From: Jeremy Sencer, Field Representative
Date: April 28, 2026
Re: Student Success Factor Increase
Testimony in Support of 2026-H 8159 (Representative Casey, et. al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of H-8159, legislation that addresses funding inequities by increasing support for students in high-poverty school districts.

Rhode Island's funding formula recognizes that students experiencing poverty require additional resources to succeed, but current funding levels do not fully reflect the intensity of need in districts with the highest concentrations of poverty. Schools serving large numbers of low-income students face significantly greater demands for academic intervention, behavioral health services, and wraparound supports, yet funding does not always keep pace with those realities.

H-8159 strengthens the student success factor by increasing the base weight and providing an enhanced level of support for districts with the highest concentrations of poverty. By directing additional resources to communities where student need is most acute, the bill improves the accuracy and equity of the state's funding formula and better aligns investment with real-world conditions in schools.

In high-poverty districts, the impact of concentrated need is felt every day in classrooms through larger support demands, staffing challenges, and increased pressure on school systems. Without sufficient resources, districts are forced to make difficult tradeoffs that affect student learning and access to services. Strengthening the formula in this targeted way helps ensure schools can meet student needs more effectively and consistently.

This is a meaningful step toward a more equitable and responsive education funding system in Rhode Island.

For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support H-8159.

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