



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

To: House Finance Committee  
From: Jeremy Sencer, RIFTHP Field Representative  
Date: April 28, 2026  
Re: Samuel Slater Middle School  
Testimony in **Support of H 8204** (Messier, et al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of H 8204, legislation that protects students and educators by enabling critical school construction and facility improvements in the City of Pawtucket.

Samuel Slater Middle School is in need of significant repairs and upgrades, and current conditions are impacting the learning environment for students and working conditions for school staff. As reflected in state facility assessments and recognized in this legislation, the building faces substantial deficiencies that affect daily school operations and limit the ability to provide a safe and supportive environment.

H 8204 provides a practical and necessary path forward by allowing the state to partner with the City of Pawtucket on financing a major school construction project. Pawtucket is already carrying a significant debt burden from ongoing school construction and does not have the capacity to take on additional borrowing without placing further strain on local taxpayers. This bill creates a responsible financing structure that allows critical improvements to move forward while maintaining fiscal stability.

Modern, safe, and well-maintained school facilities are essential to student learning and educator effectiveness. When buildings are outdated or in poor condition, it directly affects classroom instruction, student engagement, and overall school climate. Investments in school infrastructure are investments in student outcomes and in the educators who support them every day.

H 8204 recognizes both the urgency of the need in Pawtucket and the importance of a state partnership to address it. By supporting this project, the state can ensure that students and educators have access to the safe and functional learning environments they deserve.

**For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support H 8204.**

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