



**Colleen Burns Jermain, Ed.D.**  
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April 28, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chair  
House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairperson Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Colleen Burns Jermain and I am Superintendent of Schools in Newport, graduate of Newport Public Schools, resident, and positive advocate and champion of addressing how we fund public education in Rhode Island that works. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 8351, the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act.

I recognize over the course of more than a year, the Blue Ribbon Commission came together to develop a consensus set of recommendations for a fair, equitable, and adequate school funding system for Rhode Island. The legislation before you reflects those recommendations that allow a more balanced and equitable way to fund RI schools.

Rhode Island's current school funding system does not adequately or equitably support our students and communities. It is broken. The present funding system formula and process is:

- Unpredictable with a quadratic formula no one fully understands;
- A distribution allocation process in which final district allocations are determined very late in the prior fiscal year. What other business finds out its funding literally days before its new fiscal year? The June timeline of finally knowing what the school district allocation is for a July 1 new fiscal year, is not well timed and just causes undue unrest for the community, family, staff, and administrators that must balance the budget.
- Costs such as transportation are not captured in the formula; as well as other high-end costs such as special education; multi-language training for teachers and staff; and out of district student placement tuitions that must be implemented and followed by all school districts.

This proposed legislation offers a path forward. It is built on a comprehensive set of recommendations from a very diverse group of educational leaders that focus on four interconnected shifts:

**1. Accounting for the full cost of education and sharing those costs more equitably** — expanding the formula to include costs such as transportation, building maintenance, and early childhood screening, while shifting unpredictable, high-cost expenses to the state.

***Providing Students Opportunities and Access to the World Through Quality Education***

**2. Tailoring instructional costs to student needs more directly** — increasing funding for economically disadvantaged students, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students in high-cost career and technical education programs.

**3. Ensuring greater predictability for municipalities** — requiring local contributions based on a community's ability to pay, creating consistency and fairness.

**4. Requiring transparency and strategic management** — introducing accountability measures that tie spending to educational outcomes, including robust reporting and a tiered system of support for districts.

The time is now to address this funding formula and reshape how Rhode Island funds its public schools. Our students and communities cannot afford to wait.

I respectfully urge the members of this committee to move this legislation forward and take this important step toward building a school funding system that is fair, transparent, and effective for every child in Rhode Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your consideration of this important legislation. I welcome any questions and am happy to provide additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colleen Burns Jermain". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "B".

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