



To: House Finance Committee
From: Maribeth Calabro, President
Date: April 28, 2026
Re: **Funding Formula Revision**
Testimony in Support of H 8351 (McNamara, et al.)

Chairperson McNamara and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Maribeth Calabro, and I am the President of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP) and a member of the Blue-Ribbon Commission. On behalf of our more than 12,000 members, educators, school support personnel, and healthcare professionals, I am here today to testify in support of H 8351, an act to modernize our state's outdated education funding formula.

The current funding formula, established 15 years ago, was designed for a different era. Today, our schools face an ever-changing landscape in which students' needs have become significantly more complex. We are seeing a dramatic increase in fixed costs, including transportation, building maintenance, and healthcare, that consistently drain resources away from direct classroom instruction.

H 8351 provides the comprehensive structural update we desperately need by enacting the consensus recommendations of the Rhode Island Foundation's Blue-Ribbon Commission. This "Blueprint for Fair Funding" shifts our focus from simply calculating a base instructional cost to identifying the actual cost of educating every Rhode Island child. A significant and much-needed shift in thinking about student success.

The act updates "student-weighted" funding to better reflect the resources required for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students facing economic disadvantages. As educators, we know that educating all children does not cost the same; this bill ensures funding follows the student's actual needs.

By shifting substantial non-instructional costs, such as busing and building repairs, from local municipalities to the state, we can stabilize district budgets and protect classroom programs from being cannibalized by rising overhead.

H 8351 requires a minimum local contribution based on a municipality's property wealth, ensuring that every community pays its fair share while providing significant relief to our urban core districts that face the greatest fiscal challenges.

By creating a new Fiscal Responsibility Board, this bill ensures that every taxpayer dollar is tied to improved student outcomes and transparent spending practices for all public and charter educational institutions.

Our schools cannot wait another decade for a system that recognizes current realities. We urge this committee to pass H 8351 and build an education system that is as diverse, dynamic, and as resilient as the students we serve.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to Rhode Island's children.

Maribeth Calabro
President, RIFTHP

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