



Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Dear Chairperson Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Peter Chung. I am the Executive Director of Young Voices and I am a parent of a student in Providence Public Schools. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 8531, the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act.

I had the privilege of serving as a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission, a diverse group of education and community leaders convened by the Rhode Island Foundation and guided by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University. Over the course of more than a year, our Commission worked 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.

As a parent, I want my child to have the same opportunities as any student in Rhode Island. But the truth is, our schools and districts are being asked to do more and more with resources that do not match the real needs of our students. The current funding formula does not capture the full cost of running a school district. It leaves out critical expenses like transportation, building maintenance, and early childhood screening. These are not optional costs. They are basic needs that impact whether children can get to school safely, learn in a good and functional building, and get identified early for learning supports. When those costs are not properly funded, districts are forced to make difficult decisions, and families feel the impact.

I also see how the current formula does not provide enough support for students who need the most help. In Providence and other districts in the state, we have many students who are economically disadvantaged, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities. These students can absolutely succeed, but they need the right supports in place. Too often, schools are stretched thin. Families are told there are not enough staff, not enough services, or not enough programs. That means fewer counselors, fewer social workers, fewer specialized supports, and fewer opportunities for students to thrive. It creates instability, and it sends the message that some students are worth less investment than others.

This legislation offers a path forward. It is built on a comprehensive set of recommendations 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.



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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 Commission members did not agree on every detail at the start. But through honest conversation and a shared commitment to Rhode Island's children, we reached a consensus vision. That unity matters. It reflects the strength of these recommendations and the urgency of this moment.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fix a system that has been unfair for far too long. Our students in Providence cannot afford to wait. Families cannot afford to keep watching programs disappear and supports fall short. I urge you to pass this legislation and take a major step toward an equitable and stable school funding system that truly reflects what Rhode Island students need to succeed.

Thank You,
Peter Chung

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