

## Testimony in support of HB-7052

### An Act Relating to Education – Rhode Island Promise Scholarship

House Committee on Finance

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**The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Representative Azzinaro’s HB-7052,** which would make students in workforce-ready certificate programs at the community college of Rhode Island (CCRI) eligible to receive the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship. The Rhode Island Promise Scholarship provides up to two years of free tuition for recent Rhode Island high school graduates or GED holders pursuing an associate degree at CCRI. This bill would expand the eligibility for this program to include students pursuing accredited certificates. It would also make it so students can start their programs up to a semester after graduating high school or obtaining a GED instead of immediately after.

Rhode Islanders deserve to have equal access to high-quality higher education – this requires financial assistance for students, particularly low-income students. Expanding the Promise Scholarship program to include students pursuing accredited certificates and to students starting college one semester later would provide economic opportunity and upward mobility to even more youth in Rhode Island.

Accredited certificates are in high demand by employers, and CCRI offers several workforce-ready programs in high-need fields, including cybersecurity, surgical technology, court reporting, and more. Students who graduate from these programs are ready to join the workforce and contribute to Rhode Island’s economy, and expanding the Promise Scholarship would give more students the opportunity to do so. This bill would be an investment in Rhode Island’s future economy, while also improving equity by expanding opportunities and creating pathways for upward mobility for low-income students in Rhode Island. **The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports HB-7052.**