

April 30, 2026

Re: Support of House Bill 8336, Rhode Island Hope Scholarship Pilot Program Act

Good evening, Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Dante DiGregorio. I'm a political science major at Rhode Island College, and I'm here to urge you to make the Hope Scholarship permanent.

When I started college, I was struggling — financially, socially, and mentally. I switched my major three times trying to find my footing. At the same time, I was working over 30 hours a week between a campus job, Papa Gino's, and my mom's bakery. I had to quit the track team because I couldn't balance athletics, school, and work. There were real moments when I questioned whether I'd be able to stay in school at all. The financial pressure didn't just hit my bank account — it hit my confidence and my mental health.

But RIC gave me space to figure it out. I became an Orientation Leader, started building real connections, and eventually found my way into Student Community Government. That's where I found my path in political science and discovered my voice as a leader.

The Hope Scholarship made that possible.

It didn't make life easy. But it made staying possible. And because of that stability, I went from struggling student to Lead Orientation Leader, to Chief of Staff of Student Community Government, to serving today as Student Government President — helping lead some of the largest initiatives our campus has seen. I was also selected to represent RIC in Washington, D.C., interning for Representative Gabe Amo through the Washington Week Program.

None of that happens if I'm forced to leave because I can't afford to stay.

When you fund the Hope Scholarship, you're not just funding tuition. You're funding transformation. You're funding future public servants, future taxpayers, future community leaders. Students who will stay in Rhode Island, work here, and give back here. I plan to go into law and public service in this state — because Rhode Island invested in me, and I want to return that investment.

I am proof that when this state bets on its students, the return is real.

Please make the Hope Scholarship permanent — so more students have the same chance to grow, lead, and give back.

Thank you.