



RHODE ISLAND  
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND  
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT  
AFL - CIO

To: House Finance Committee  
From: Jeremy Sencer, RIFTHP Field Representative  
Date: April 29, 2026  
Re: Rhode Island Hope Scholarship Program  
Testimony in **Support of H 8336** (McNamara, et al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of H 8336, legislation that strengthens college affordability by making the Rhode Island Hope Scholarship a permanent program for students at Rhode Island College.

Rhode Island College is one of the state's most important public institutions and a cornerstone of Rhode Island's workforce development. It educates a large share of the state's future teachers, nurses, social workers, and public servants—professionals who are essential to the functioning of our schools, healthcare system, and communities. For many Rhode Island students, particularly first-generation college students and those from working families, RIC represents the most accessible and affordable pathway to a four-year degree.

The Hope Scholarship has already demonstrated its value by increasing interest in Rhode Island College and making it a more viable option for students who might otherwise leave the state or forgo a four-year degree altogether. By reducing tuition costs, the program has helped shift student decision-making, encouraging more Rhode Island students to enroll at RIC and stay on track to complete their degrees. This is exactly the kind of policy Rhode Island needs to strengthen its public higher education system and retain talent within the state.

H 8336 provides the long-term commitment needed to sustain and build on this progress. A stable and predictable scholarship program gives students and families the confidence to choose Rhode Island College, knowing that affordability will remain within reach. It also reinforces the state's commitment to investing in its public higher education system and the students who rely on it.

When students have access to affordable, high-quality education at Rhode Island College, the benefits extend far beyond the individual. Schools gain well-prepared educators, hospitals gain trained professionals, and communities gain residents who are equipped to contribute and lead. Strengthening RIC through sustained investment in student access is a smart, forward-looking policy choice for Rhode Island.

For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support H 8336.

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