

## Chris O'Brien

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**From:** Bari Harlam <civicinput@newmode.io>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 30, 2026 12:49 PM  
**To:** House Finance Committee  
**Subject:** My Support for H8355 & RISPE

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Dear Chair Marvin Abney,

I am writing to express my strong support for state funding for the Rhode Island School for Progressive Education (RISPE) through **H8355**. Rhode Island continues to face critical shortages of well-prepared educators, particularly in multilingual learner (MLL) instruction, special education, and elementary classrooms. These gaps disproportionately impact students who rely most on access to skilled, highly trained teachers to succeed.

RISPE is addressing this challenge directly. Through its targeted programming in TESOL, MLL endorsement, special education, and elementary education, RISPE is preparing educators with the knowledge and tools needed to deliver high-quality, culturally relevant instruction. This work is grounded in real partnerships with schools and districts and is already making a meaningful difference in classrooms across our state.

The data supporting the impact is impressive. In Middletown, classrooms led by RISPE trained teachers are improving literacy at 1.5-2X the statewide average. And in Central Falls, where classrooms are overrepresented by multi-language learners, the rate of "not meeting" was cut in half when teachers received RISPE training.

H8355 represents a strategic and timely investment in a solution that is working. With sustained state funding, RISPE can expand its reach, strengthen its programming, and prepare more educators to meet Rhode Island's most pressing workforce needs. Without this investment, opportunities to grow this pipeline—and to better serve our students—will remain limited.

I urge you to support H8355 and invest in RISPE's proven approach to educator preparation. Doing so will help ensure that all Rhode Island students, especially those with the greatest needs, have access to excellent teaching and the opportunities they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration.

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