



State of Rhode Island
Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos

April 30, 2026

The Hon. Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
State House – Room 35
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02909

RE: SUPPORT for Resolution H8355

Chair Abney:

I write today in support of H8355, a Joint Resolution to appropriate \$300 for the Rhode Island School for Progressive Education (RISPE). 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.

Rhode Island's public schools remain severely underrepresented when it comes to teachers of color. Fewer than five percent of teachers in our state identify as people of color — a stark contrast to the growing diversity of our student population. Research consistently demonstrates that students benefit academically, socially, and emotionally when they are taught by educators who reflect their own backgrounds and lived experiences. RISPE was founded with the intentional mission to address this inequity by recruiting and preparing more educators of color for Rhode Island's public schools.

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.

H8355 represents a strategic and timely investment in a solution that is working. The \$300,000 appropriation to the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner for RISPE will enable this institution to 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, culturally responsive classrooms, and the opportunities they deserve. This is not

only an investment in our teachers; it is an investment in the future of our democracy and the strength of our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sabina Matos". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Sabina Matos
Lieutenant Governor
State of Rhode Island

CC: The Hon. Scott Slater