



Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education

Organizational Testimony in Support of HB 8388

May 7, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE), we write in strong support of House Bill 8388.

ARISE is a youth-led education justice organization in Providence, Rhode Island. We work alongside Southeast Asian, BIPOC, and immigrant young people, who've experienced the consequences of chronic underinvestment in our communities. Every day, our youth navigate schools without adequate mental health support; their families struggle with rising costs of living, inaccessible healthcare systems, unstable housing conditions, and public infrastructures stretched beyond capacity. These conditions are not inevitable, but the result of political choices.

H-8388 represents a meaningful step toward a more equitable Rhode Island, where those with the greatest wealth contribute their fair share to the public systems we all rely on. According to Revenue for Rhode Island, this proposal would generate approximately \$203 million annually that could be invested into healthcare, childcare, food assistance, public education, transportation, and senior services, while only impacting roughly 6,100 tax filers in the state.

Importantly, this proposal asks only for an additional 3% surtax on taxable income above \$640,000 annually. At a time when working-class Rhode Islanders are carrying disproportionate tax burdens, this bill moves us toward greater fairness. As the accompanying data shows, Rhode Islanders with the lowest incomes currently pay a higher percentage of their income in state and local taxes than the wealthiest Rhode Islanders. This is neither sustainable nor just.

Our youth understand deeply that budgets are moral documents. When our state fails to adequately fund schools, youth programming, language access services, mental healthcare, and community supports, young people bear the consequences. We see students struggling to access counselors while schools remain under-resourced. We see immigrant families forced to navigate growing economic precarity while federal cuts threaten Medicaid, SNAP, and other essential lifelines. We see nonprofit and grassroots organizations asked to fill widening gaps left by austerity and disinvestment.

At the same time, the wealthiest households continue to benefit from decades of tax policy that have overwhelmingly favored the ultra-rich. The factsheet notes that Rhode Island has lost over a billion

dollars in tax revenue due to tax reforms enacted since 2006, including nearly \$600 million in lost revenue in 2026 alone. Meanwhile, the top 1% are projected to receive substantial federal tax breaks under recent federal policy changes. Asking the wealthiest Rhode Islanders to contribute slightly more toward the collective wellbeing of our state is both reasonable and necessary.

As an organization grounded in education justice, ARISE believes all young people deserve schools and communities that are fully resourced, safe, affirming, and capable of meeting their needs. Achieving that vision requires sustained public investment. H-8388 offers Rhode Island an opportunity to invest in collective care rather than continued scarcity.

We urge the Committee to support H-8388 and move Rhode Island toward a future where everyone pays their fair share — and all of our communities can thrive.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE)