



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

To: House Finance Committee
From: Jeremy Sencer, RIFTHP Field Representative
Date: May 19, 2026
Re: Education Funding Formula Stability for Students Experiencing Poverty
Testimony in **Support of H 8511** (Morales, et al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of H 8511, legislation that protects school funding for students experiencing poverty by strengthening the education funding formula and preventing districts from losing resources due to disruptions in public benefit enrollment.

Rhode Island's highest-poverty districts serve students whose educational needs are often shaped by housing instability, food insecurity, health disparities, and other barriers outside the classroom. Schools in these communities require additional resources to provide academic supports, social-emotional services, intervention programs, and wraparound services that help students succeed.

H 8511 recognizes that fluctuations in enrollment in programs such as SNAP do not necessarily reflect changes in student need. Administrative disruptions or changes in benefit participation should not result in sudden reductions in education funding for districts serving large numbers of students living in poverty. This legislation appropriately protects districts from funding losses tied to those disruptions while also increasing the student success factor to better reflect the additional resources required to support students experiencing poverty.

Stable and adequate funding matters for educators as well as students. Unexpected reductions in aid can affect staffing levels, student supports, intervention services, and the overall learning environment. Schools need predictable resources to plan effectively and sustain programs that serve students with the greatest needs.

By strengthening the student success factor and protecting districts from funding instability, H 8511 moves Rhode Island closer to a funding system that more accurately reflects the realities facing high-poverty communities and supports educational equity statewide.

For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support H 8511.

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