



**Office of the
Postsecondary
Commissioner**

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May 21, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Subject: H 8528 – Support for Public Higher Education Facilities Investments at Rhode Island College and the Community College of Rhode Island

Dear Chairman Abney:

The Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (RIOPC) supports the \$215 million capital investment for public higher education facilities included in H 8528, which would be submitted to the voters at the November 2026 general election. These investments reflect the State's commitment to strengthening Rhode Island's public higher education system and workforce pipeline and mirror the higher education capital investments advanced in Governor McKee's FY27 recommended budget.

This letter focuses specifically on the proposed investments at Rhode Island College (RIC) and the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), including \$50 million for the Student Success and Career Readiness Center and related renovations at the Adams Library on the RIC campus and \$60 million for the Workforce Innovation Center (WIC) on CCRI's Warwick campus. These projects will expand career readiness, workforce development, and student support services at two of Rhode Island's public higher education institutions.

Rhode Island's economy faces workforce readiness challenges that these new centers are designed to address. Both RIC and CCRI are proven leaders in workforce development. The addition of the WIC at CCRI and the Student Success and Career Readiness Center at the Adams Library at RIC will expand professional and career readiness across Rhode Island and help develop the skilled workforce Rhode Island employers need. These projects will provide opportunities for students to build in-demand skills that support long-term economic opportunity for Rhode Islanders.

Our successful partnership with CCRI in providing workforce training to General Dynamics Electric Boat through RIOPC's Westerly Education Center demonstrates the unique capability of the college to develop curricula, provide faculty expertise tailored to meet employer needs, and bolster Rhode Island's economy. The WIC will enhance CCRI's well-established success in workforce development by preparing students for careers in advanced and emerging industries and helping Rhode Island meet employer demand for emerging and high-demand occupations.

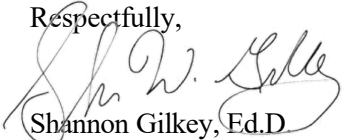
At RIC, through strong partnerships, experiential learning opportunities, and workforce-aligned academic programs, the college prepares students for in-demand careers that support the state's economy. The Student Success and Career Readiness Center at the Adams Library will be a centralized, one-stop shop for career exploration, academic advising, tutoring, digital learning resources, and employer engagement. Providing these key services is critical to ensuring that students have the support they need to be successful through their academic careers and into the workforce.

The creation of the WIC at CCRI and the Student Success and Career Readiness Center at RIC represents a critical opportunity to broaden the colleges' workforce development capacities by expanding access to

workforce and student support services for Rhode Islanders and addressing the changing needs of our modern workforce. This will strengthen Rhode Island's workforce, economy, and future.

For these reasons, RIOPC respectfully urges the Committee's support of H 8528.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shannon Gilkey".

Shannon Gilkey, Ed.D

Commissioner of Postsecondary Education

Cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance

The Honorable Jacquelyn Baginski, Chair, House Innovation and Technology Committee

Ms. Danica Jacoi, Chief of Staff and Special Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House

Ms. Nicole McCarty, Esq.