



Rhode Island Office of the  
Postsecondary Commissioner

Shannon W. Gilkey, EdD, Commissioner

February 8, 2022

Chairman Marvin L. Abney  
House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02908

**RE: Budget Articles 5 and 14**

Dear Chairman Abney:

I am writing in enthusiastic support of the Governor's Budget Articles 5 and 14, which would finance renovation and modernization projects on the campuses of the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), new construction and repairs on the University of Rhode Island's (URI) Narragansett Bay Campus, and the construction of a "one stop" Student Services Center on the campus of Rhode Island College (RIC).

Many of CCRI campus buildings, having seen little change during almost 50 years of use, do not today adequately support the needs of the College's students, staff, and faculty. Quality academic spaces and student support spaces matter. We know that when students learn in high-quality facilities, their outcomes improve. Modern classrooms with digital learning tools can bridge the gap between in-class and online learning, opening up new opportunities to teach more broadly. Additionally, modernization of the work environment further enhances job satisfaction for faculty and staff.

The bond funding proposed in Article 5 would allow CCRI to renovate and upgrade academic and lab spaces throughout all four campuses, including:

- science and technology labs
- instructional space for academic and workforce development programs, and
- existing spaces for delivery of student support services

In addition to the upgrades at CCRI, I urge the Committee's approval of funding for RIC's Student Services Center in Article 14. Over the last several decades, higher education institutions across the country have effectively incorporated "one stop" student service centers to support students, their success, and degree completion. The proposed Student Services Center at RIC would centralize critical services, including the Records Office, Financial Aid Office, the Bursar, the Counseling Center, Health Services, and the Military Resource Center. The centrally located building will be accessible online, at night, and on weekends to accommodate RIC's growing percentage of adult and working students. It will also improve RIC employees' work environments and provide them with the tools and technology they deserve and need in their service to students.

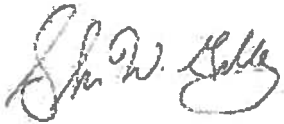
The proposed Student Services Center is a tremendous opportunity for Rhode Island College to remove barriers and make sure students absolutely have access to services vital to their college success.

Finally, I urge your support of general obligation bonds that would finance new construction and repairs of existing facilities on URI's Narragansett Bay Campus. These projects, including the replacement of the Horn Laboratories with a modern laboratory facility and the construction of the Ocean Robotics Laboratory and the Ocean Engineering Education and Research Center, would support the educational and research needs of students in the marine disciplines.

Thank you for your continued support of the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the University of Rhode Island. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon Gilkey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Shannon Gilkey  
Commissioner of Postsecondary Education