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Dear Chairperson Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

This letter is written on behalf of the 550 members of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals to express our strong support for House Bill No. 7552, which seeks to include school superintendents, central office officials, principals, teachers, and all school employees within the definition of “public official” with respect to criminal threats and extortion.

Principals routinely make decisions in the course of their leadership that, while made in the best interests of students, can prompt strong reactions from parents and members of the public. Principals make controversial decisions about student discipline, athletic eligibility, grade promotion, and graduation eligibility.. At times, these reactions include threats or harassment delivered verbally, through emails, phone calls, or social media posts. At best, such threats are unsettling. At worst, they are frightening and deeply disruptive.

Passage of H7552, extending to school leaders the protections already afforded to elected and appointed officials, would send a clear message of respect and support. Our profession is currently experiencing a disturbingly thin bench of educators who aspire to become principals. Enacting this legislation would help strengthen the confidence of current and aspiring school leaders, knowing that the laws of Rhode Island provide meaningful protection. It would affirm that the General Assembly stands behind those who serve in our schools each day.

We urge its passage.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Littlefield  
Executive Director

