



April 2, 2026

Representative Arthur Corvese
Chair, House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Opposition to H8277 and Impact on Workforce Investment

Dear Chairman Corvese,

Thank you for allowing the team the opportunity to provide testimony before the House Committee on Labor on Monday evening regarding **House Bill 8277**. I appreciate the Committee's time and consideration of the concerns raised by the New England Tech team and our employer partners.

I write on behalf of the New England Institute of Technology to reiterate our opposition to H8277 and to share additional context that I believe is important for the Committee's consideration.

New England Tech is making a \$40 million private investment in a new, state-of-the-art Skilled Trades Center on our East Greenwich campus. This facility is designed to significantly expand training capacity in high-demand fields, including plumbing, HVAC, electrical, and building construction. This investment reflects our long-term commitment to Rhode Island's workforce and our belief that skilled trades education is critical to the state's economic health.

The plumbing program housed in this new facility is built in close collaboration with employer partners and aligns directly with Rhode Island's licensure framework. The training hours and associate degree pathway currently recognized under state law are integral to the value and effectiveness of this investment. **House Bill 8277 penalizes our students** by eliminating licensure credit and reducing recognized training hours for graduates who complete rigorous, hands-on instruction in modern lab environments and have **proven themselves qualitatively over three decades**.

This bill introduced at the same time as we announced our \$40 million investment, **undermines the logic behind private investment in our state**, investment that is being made specifically to strengthen Rhode Island's workforce, accelerate entry into licensed professions, and respond to documented labor shortages.

NEIT strongly supports multiple, high-quality pathways into the trades, including associate degree programs and aligning with RI's career and technology programs. These models are not competing, they are complementary. The current framework has worked successfully for decades and is supported by employers who hire our graduates and rely on their preparation. NEIT has consistently responded to skill and job demands as outlined by the State and we work as a collaborative partner on many initiatives including, but not limited to our extensive work with General Dynamics Electric Boat, workforce training for individuals that are incarcerated in welding, as well as workforce programs in automotive, pipefitting and heating technology with industry partners, and intentional upskilling of CNAs to LPNs in RI's nursing homes. NEIT is also training and educating surgical technologists in a partnership with Brown University Health.

At a time when workforce demand is well documented and private institutions are investing heavily to meet that need, we urge the Committee to ensure that state policy **encourages, not undermines, those efforts.**

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the House Committee on Labor to oppose H8277 and preserve long-standing, proven pathways that support workforce growth, safety, and economic stability in Rhode Island.

Thank you again for your leadership and for the opportunity to share these concerns. I would welcome the chance to discuss this matter further.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard J. Gouse". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Richard Gouse

President

Cc: Speaker Joseph Shekarchi