

Dear RI Legislators:

I am writing in support of H 7113 stated as follows:

42-4-24 State Music

The music genre of rhythm and blues is hereby designated as the state music. For purposes of this section, rhythm and blues is defined as music which contains elements of pop, soul, funk, hip-hop and electronic music.

Our organization, the Rhode Island Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society was established in 2003:

- * To preserve and promote R&B through activities, events and education;
- * To preserve and promote the heritage, legacy and historical connections of R&B music in the evolution of American popular music; and
- * To improve public awareness and acceptance of R&B as a musical art form.

Since our founding we have envisioned that R&B would be the official state music. Around 2006 the Governor of Rhode Island and the Mayor of the city of Providence designated August as R&B Heritage Month. We hold an R&B Festival every August to share Rhythm & Blues music with the local community and promote the R&B music genre.

Rhythm & Blues is the most played and most listened to music in Rhode Island. Historically, Rhythm & Blues came to be the foundation for other musical offerings throughout the Rhythm & Blues era (1940s - 1970s). The RI Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society has archived oral histories and community testimonials of RI R&B performers. The collection, located at the Rhode Island Historical Society, documents the many cultural obstacles and organized resistance denied Black musicians and entertainers in RI. These archives were established to ensure that full credit is given to the native Black community of RI for the development and popularizing of a musical genre that became known as Rhythm & Blues.

We also promote the RI R&B legacy to future generations through our Instruments for Children Program and the 'A Day in the Life' musical series. These programs highlight the contribution of Rhythm & Blues to the local culture to ensure that the R&B heritage is forever part of local history.

Despite the challenges throughout the years, Rhythm & Blues music continues to contribute to the local culture. Music venues became integrated. The result was enhanced entertainment opportunity, improved race relations, expanded historical landscape and diversified quality of life in Rhode Island.

The Black community has a long history of watching their music legacy and related creative musical initiatives be absorbed by others and not recognized for its role in contributing to Rhode Island culture. Establishing Rhythm & Blues as the State Music of Rhode Island brings us one step closer to full recognition of this music genre and its place within the full cultural landscape of the State of Rhode Island.

Thank you for your support of this legislation.

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