

Dear RI Legislators:

I am writing to respectfully request your 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".

In this regard, the Rhode Island Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society was established in 2003 to:

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

Since the founding the organization has 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.

The Society holds an R&B Festival every August to share Rhythm & Blues music with the local community, promote the R&B music genre and preserve the unique cultural contribution.

Rhythm & Blues is the most played, most listened to and most influential music in Rhode Island and beyond. Historically, Rhythm & Blues came to be the foundation for other popular musical offerings throughout the Rhythm & Blues era that included the renown Rock & Roll. 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.

The Society also promotes 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 perpetuated as part of local history. Music venues like the legendary Celebrity Club became integrated. The result was enhanced entertainment opportunity, improved race relations, expanded historical landscape and diversified quality of life in Rhode Island leading to the state commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion.

Despite the challenges throughout the years, the highly influential Rhythm & Blues music continues to contribute to the local culture.

The indigenous 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 significant 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, its cultural roots and its place within the full cultural landscape of the State of Rhode Island. In keeping with the state spirit & intent of diversity, equality and inclusion as displayed by the recognition of the proud Italian Community for its role in contributing the deep - fried calamari appetizer to Rhode Island culture, your support for this worthy legislation is greatly appreciated.

Thank you in advance for your support of this legislation.

Yours truly,

Dr. Edward A. Coates, Native Rhode Islander & Former President
Rhode Island Rhythm & Blues Preservation Society