



April 29, 2026

The Honorable Karen Alzate
Chair, House Committee on Special Legislation
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 8474

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the National Education Association Rhode Island (NEARI) and our 12,000 members, I write to express our strong support for H 8474, legislation to designate the bridge carrying U.S. Route 44 over Interstate 95 in Providence as the George Nee Bridge.

This proposal is both fitting and deeply meaningful. For nearly half a century, George Nee has long been as one of Rhode Island's most steadfast champions for working families. His life's work reflects a profound and unwavering commitment to economic fairness, civil rights, and the dignity of labor.

George Nee's journey into the labor movement began with courage and conviction. Leaving Boston College in 1969, he joined the United Farm Workers to organize the grape boycott, an effort that successfully secured union contracts and improved working conditions for farm workers. His work continued across California and New England, and in 1971 he arrived in Rhode Island to lead a lettuce boycott. Through these experiences, working alongside marginalized workers facing immense barriers, George developed a lifelong belief in the transformative power of collective action.

His leadership in Rhode Island has been nothing short of extraordinary. As the founding president of SEIU Local 76, he brought together low-wage workers; jewelry workers, clerical staff, and healthcare employees, into a powerful voice for fairness and equity. His subsequent tenure with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, first as Executive Director, then Secretary-Treasurer, and ultimately as President, has solidified his legacy as a tireless advocate for workers across all sectors.

George Nee has also played a critical role in shaping Rhode Island's economic and civic landscape. Through his service on boards such as the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority, the Providence Performing Arts Center, the Human Resource Investment Council, and the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, he has ensured that the voices of working people are represented in key decisions affecting our state's future. His leadership with the Institute for Labor Studies and Research and The United Way of Rhode Island further underscores his commitment to strengthening communities and expanding opportunity.

Importantly, this bridge is more than a physical structure, it is symbolic of George Nee's

enduring presence in the daily fight for justice. It was crossed countless times by George as he traveled from the AFL-CIO office to the Rhode Island State House, where he earned a reputation as “the people’s lobbyist.” In that role, he consistently worked to uphold and expand economic, civil, and moral justice for working-class Rhode Islanders.

Naming this bridge in his honor is a tribute not only to his personal legacy, but to the broader labor movement and the generations of workers whose lives have been improved by his advocacy. It will serve as a lasting reminder of the power of persistence, solidarity, and principled leadership.

We urge the Committee to pass H 8474 and appropriately recognize George Nee’s immeasurable contributions to our state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Alexander Lucini
Government Relations Director, NEARI