



House Committee on State Government and Elections

- Support **FOR House Resolution 5459**, Right to an Adequate Education
- Hearing date: April 3, 2025

Chair Evan Stanley and distinguished Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island and as a 33-year educator of academically-at-risk students, I urge you to support House Resolution 5459. This joint resolution proposes an amendment to the Constitution that would guarantee the right to an adequate education for all Rhode Islanders. By enshrining this right in our state constitution, our system of free public schools would guarantee an equal opportunity for all residents to receive an education that is “equitable and meaningful.” Additionally, this amendment would allow for the judicial enforcement of this provision.

Given the federal government’s current dismantling of the Department of Education and the recent laying off of ten thousand employees from the Department of Health and Human Services, it is important to pass this resolution this session. Federal funding and support for our most vulnerable students in this state are expected to be greatly reduced. But Rhode Island must still educate and support all public-school children in an adequate and meaningful way. This bill will provide the impetus for fulfilling such a mandate. It’s important that we do not take away any child’s rights or their opportunities.

Although Rhode Island’s Education Funding Formula was established to equalize the playing field for all students regardless of their household income or community’s wealth, the formula is not perfect. In some communities, funding is not distributed equitably and academic resources are lacking. In other towns and cities, students need greater academic support. When such support is lacking, students are being short-changed. That inequity can fail a student for years to come and perhaps a lifetime. Such inequity also fails our communities. Fortunately, the judicial enforcement clause of House Resolution 5459 provides for accountability and puts backbone behind this right to an adequate and equitable education. And this will benefit everyone.

Guaranteeing an equal education opportunity for all public-school students will promote self-sufficient, productive citizens as well as prosperous communities. Today we are educating the next generation of nurses, engineers, teachers, tech specialists, business owners, and trade professionals. Education is key to ensure that pathways to self-sufficiency or careers like these are accessible to all.

Many state constitutions in this country have a provision that guarantees the right to an adequate education. It’s time for Rhode Island to do the same. The judicial enforcement

provision of this resolution can make equal opportunity for a meaningful education a more likely reality for every child. Our students and communities will be the richer for it. And the vitality and effectiveness of our democracy depends on it.

The League of Woman Voters of Rhode Island and I urge you to pass House Resolution 5459 this session.

Thank you,

*Diana (Donnie) McGee*

Diana (Donnie) McGee, Advocacy Committee Cochair

League of Women Voters of RI, One Richmond Square, Providence, RI 02903