



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT
AFL - CIO

To: Senate Education Committee
From: Jeremy Sencer, Field Representative
Date: March 4, 2026
Re: **School Meal Fee Limits**
Testimony in **Support of S 2635** (Senator Lawson, et. al.)

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP) supports S 2635, which establishes important protection for families by limiting transaction fees associated with school meal payments and ensuring clear, statewide transparency standards.

This legislation addresses a basic equity issue. Families should not be required to pay profit-generating or convenience-based fees simply to deposit funds into a student meal account. Even modest transaction charges can accumulate over the course of a school year and disproportionately impact working families and those already facing financial strain.

The bill appropriately limits fees to the actual costs of processing payments, caps allowable charges, and prohibits the imposition of fees designed to generate revenue beyond those costs. It further requires that all districts provide at least one no-fee payment option, ensuring that no family is compelled to incur additional charges to access school meal services.

S 2635 also strengthens transparency requirements by mandating clear disclosure of any user fees before a transaction is completed and requiring notification of available no-fee alternatives. These provisions promote fairness, accountability, and consistency across districts.

By ensuring that funds intended for student meals are directed toward feeding students — not vendor profit — this legislation reinforces Rhode Island’s commitment to equity and responsible stewardship of public resources.

The RIFTHP urges support of the legislation.

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