



April 16, 2026

Hon. Louis P. DiPalma  
c/o [SenateFinance@rilegislature.gov](mailto:SenateFinance@rilegislature.gov)  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Finance, Room 211  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Article 6- Question 4: Career and Technical Education General Obligation Bond**

Dear Chairman DiPalma:

On behalf of the 10,000 men and women of the Rhode Island Building and Construction Trades, and our four construction management associations, BuildRI applauds the Governor, the Administration, the Department of Education, and the Commissioner for recognizing the urgent need to invest in Career and Technical Education pathways for Rhode Island students.

However, as written, BuildRI, and our partners, have concerns with Article 6 – Question 4 of the Governor’s Budget. Instead, we are asking the General Assembly to consider adopting an alternative proposal.

For decades, our education system emphasized a singular pathway: high school to college. In doing so, we unintentionally created a stigma that careers in the skilled trades were “less than,” despite the fact these careers provide family-supporting wages, healthcare, retirement security, which equal long-term economic prosperity. Today, union journey workers in Rhode Island routinely earn six-figure incomes, plus their benefits. Yet the unionized construction industry faces a critical skilled labor shortage.

The Building Trades stand ready as active partners in expanding construction-based CTE opportunities across our public schools. We strongly urge the General Assembly to ensure that this investment is impactful, measurable, and aligned with proven outcomes.

The Governor’s proposal to bond \$50 million to expand CTE pathways is an important first step. But potentially dispersing those funds across 36 school districts will dilute their impact and fail to produce the workforce results Rhode Island urgently needs.

Instead, we urge you to make a targeted, strategic investment in the two schools that are already demonstrating success in preparing students for careers in the construction trades:

- Requesting \$50 million, that is already allocated in the Governor’s budget, to expand capacity and modernize facilities at William M. Davies, Jr. Career and Technical High School in Lincoln.

- And additionally, we are requesting funds to expand and renovate facilities that have proven success such as Providence Career & Technical Academy, and at the Apprenticeship Exploratory School in Cranston.

These schools are not theoretical models. They are producing real results. Students graduate from Davies, PSTA, and AES with industry-aligned skills and direct pathways into registered apprenticeship programs that allow them to earn while they learn, enter the workforce debt-free, and begin building middle-class lives immediately after graduation.

For other districts interested in construction-based CTE pathways, we propose a regionalized model within Rhode Island's five busing districts; with funding supporting expansion in future fiscal years. Due to the fact industry-qualified instructors and training resources cannot be effectively replicated in every district, a regional approach allows schools to specialize in specific construction pathways while maintaining industry standards. Students can begin exploring pathways in middle school and then attend the regional high school best aligned with their chosen trade. This approach ensures quality and consistency of instruction; while maximizing the impact of limited industry training resources; and collaboration rather than competition between districts.

At a time when artificial intelligence is transforming many industries, the skilled construction trades remain among the few careers that cannot be outsourced or automated. Rhode Island has an opportunity to lead by investing in the proven pipeline that already exists at Davies, PSTA, and AES.

The apprenticeship model has built Rhode Island's middle class for generations. That journey begins in the classroom within our already accomplished and proven institutions.

We respectfully urge the Committee to concentrate this investment where it will have the greatest measurable return for students, taxpayers, and Rhode Island's economy.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,



**Anthony J. Cherry**

*Assistant Executive Director*

*Build Rhode Island*