

Letter of Support – RI State History Center
FY2027 Budget – Article 6, Question 6
February 26, 2026

To Chair DiPalma and Members of the Senate Committee on Finance:

I write in strong support of the proposed legislation to establish a Rhode Island State History Center in Providence.

For many years, I have been deeply involved in preserving and promoting Rhode Island's history. I have served as Commander of the Pawtuxet Rangers Historic Militia, President of the Rhode Island Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, Governor of the Rhode Island Society of Colonial Wars, and Governor of the Rhode Island Mayflower Society. Through these roles, I have seen firsthand how access to authentic historical documents strengthens civic understanding and connects people to our shared past.

Rhode Island's history is central to the American story. Yet many of our most significant state documents remain largely inaccessible to the public. The State Archives are housed in leased space without permanent exhibit capacity, limiting the safe display of irreplaceable materials. Documents such as the Gaspee Commission papers, the Battle of Rhode Island map, and early printings of the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights deserve a secure, permanent home where Rhode Islanders, students, and visitors can experience them directly.

A State History Center would provide dedicated exhibit and learning space, complement State House tours, and strengthen Providence as a cultural and educational destination. As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary, this is a timely and meaningful investment. It would advance civic education, support heritage tourism, and reinforce pride in Rhode Island's distinctive role in American history.

Preserving and sharing our history is not optional. It is a public responsibility. History isn't just memory. It's infrastructure for civic identity. I respectfully urge you to support this legislation and ensure that Rhode Island's story is protected, accessible, and visible for generations to come.

Thank you for your service and your consideration.

Sincerely,



COL Ron Barnes
Past Commander
Pawtuxet Rangers, RIHM 1774
Pawtuxet Village