



May 18, 2026

The Honorable Senator Louis P. DiPalma, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island State Senate
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: SENATE BILL 2551 - AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE EDUCATION EQUITY AND PROPERTY TAX RELIEF ACT

Chair DiPalma and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2551, legislation intended to address the growing impact of partially funded and unfunded educational mandates on local school districts and municipal taxpayers.

Cities and towns across Rhode Island continue to face increasing fiscal pressures associated with implementing state educational requirements while balancing local budgets and maintaining critical municipal services. The League appreciates the General Assembly's recognition that many educational initiatives, while well-intentioned and beneficial to students, can create significant local financial obligations when adequate state funding is not provided.

The League is particularly encouraged by several provisions contained within this legislation.

First, the bill establishes a formal process requiring the Department of Revenue, in collaboration with local education agencies, to identify and publicly report costs borne by districts that are partially funded or unfunded. This reporting mechanism promotes transparency, accountability, and a more informed budget development process by ensuring policymakers and the public have a clearer understanding of the local fiscal impacts associated with state educational mandates.

Second, the legislation's provision requiring the state to assume the cost of dual enrollment programs, including Community College of Rhode Island and the New England Institute of Technology early college completion programs, represents an important step toward relieving financial burdens currently absorbed by local districts and property taxpayers. Expanding access to dual enrollment opportunities is a worthwhile goal, and the League strongly believes such statewide educational priorities should be supported with sustainable state funding.

The League also appreciates the bill's efforts to provide districts with additional flexibility regarding curriculum implementation and procurement decisions. Allowing educational districts to petition for substantially similar lower-cost curriculum options may help local school systems better manage costs while continuing to meet educational standards established by the Rhode Island Department of Education.

Additionally, important provisions establishing clearer Career and Technical Education enrollment timelines may assist sending districts with budget planning and reduce unexpected cost fluctuations during the fiscal year.

While the League recognizes that additional discussions may still be warranted regarding implementation details and long-term reimbursement mechanisms, Senate Bill 2551 represents a constructive step toward acknowledging and addressing the financial challenges municipalities and school districts face in carrying out state educational mandates.

For these reasons, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns respectfully supports Senate Bill 2551 and appreciates the Committee's consideration of this important legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Rossi", written in a cursive style.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Finance Committee