

May 12, 2026

Senate Finance Chair
Senator Louis P. DiPalma
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing as a workforce program participant of RIBBA to express my strong support for S2558. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass this critical legislation, which will allow RIBBA to continue expanding workforce development opportunities, technical assistance services, and economic support for small businesses and professionals across Rhode Island.

S2558—Joint Resolution Making an Appropriation of \$200,000 to RIBBA—is not just an investment in an organization. It is an investment in Rhode Islanders like me who are working to grow professionally, build sustainable careers, strengthen our communities, and contribute to the state’s economy.

Right now, Rhode Island’s economy is facing serious challenges. Rhode Island was recently ranked the worst state in the nation to start a business in 2026 for the second consecutive year. Small businesses are struggling to survive due to rising costs, workforce shortages, inflation, limited access to capital, and ongoing economic uncertainty. Many entrepreneurs and professionals are doing everything they can to create stability for themselves and their families, but they cannot do it alone.

That is why organizations like RIBBA are more important now than ever before.

Through workforce development programs, leadership training, mentorship, technical assistance, and professional growth opportunities, RIBBA creates real pathways for economic mobility and career advancement. RIBBA is helping professionals gain the skills, confidence, and support needed to move into higher-paying roles, strengthen leadership capacity, and create long-term success for Rhode Island’s economy.

RIBBA has demonstrated a strong and measurable impact across Rhode Island:

- Over 6,000 small businesses reached, with more than 1,700 receiving direct development support
- Supported 50+ certified MWBEs, generating more than \$30 million in economic activity
- Helped clients secure over \$2.3 million in capital
- Contributed to the creation of 3,000+ jobs statewide
- Trained more than 230 individuals with a 98% graduation rate, preparing professionals for career advancement and strengthening Rhode Island’s workforce

Through my own experience, RIBBA has had a meaningful impact on my own professional and leadership journey. Through the connections, mentorship, and opportunities I’ve gained, I’ve been able to expand my network, strengthen my leadership skills, and build relationships with professionals and community leaders across Rhode Island who continue to inspire and support one another.

I have also seen the impact RIBBA has had on many other participants and alumni who have gone on to grow professionally, pursue leadership opportunities, strengthen their businesses, and create pathways

not only for themselves but for their families and communities. The relationships and support systems built through RIBBA create lasting impact far beyond the classroom or program itself.

Without targeted funding, RIBBA may be forced to reduce staff and scale back critical programs that support workforce participants, emerging professionals, entrepreneurs, and underserved communities across Rhode Island. This would be a tremendous loss at a time when our state needs more investment in workforce and economic development—not less.

This funding is an investment in:

- Workforce development
- Economic mobility
- Job creation
- Stronger communities across Rhode Island
- The long-term success and competitiveness of Rhode Island’s economy

The success of Rhode Island’s workforce and small business community is directly connected to the long-term economic strength and prosperity of our state.

I respectfully urge you to support the passage of S2558 so RIBBA can continue providing life-changing programs and critical services that create opportunities, strengthen our workforce, support entrepreneurs, and drive economic growth across Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration, leadership, and continued commitment to Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Neyda DeJesus

Emerging Leaders Development Program

Cohort #4