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ACLU OF RI POSITION: NEUTRAL/AMEND

**TESTIMONY ON 26-S 2662,
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM
May 19, 2026**

The ACLU of Rhode Island has no position on the laudable goal of this legislation, to help students pay off their loan debts in high-need professions. However, we do wish to offer brief comments on two provisions in the bill.

First, the bill would allow the Department of Labor and Training to designate “from time to time by rule or public notice” which professions qualify for the student loan repayment program. [Page 2, lines 22-27] In light of the very significant impact of this determination, we believe these designations should always be adopted by the rule-making process established by the Administrative Procedures Act, rather than merely by a “public notice.” Such a decision, we submit, warrants formal public review and consideration as the APA envisions. We would therefore urge the deletion of the words “or public notice.”

Second, we applaud the bill’s interest in protecting the privacy of the individuals participating in the program. [Page 6, lines 22-23] However, since the annual report requires the listing of all employers participating, that listing could, along with the other information about the employer required to be published, identify individuals working in small workplaces. The committee might therefore wish to consider an amendment that would not require the formal listing of an employer’s name if the workplace has fewer than a certain number of employees but require other information to allow for some level of understanding of the employer’s workplace.

Thank you for considering our views.