



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT
AFL - CIO

To: Senate Finance Committee
From: Jeremy Sencer, RIFTHP Field Representative
Date: May 19, 2026
Re: Strengthening Education Funding Equity for Students Experiencing Poverty
Testimony in **Support of S 2826** (Murray, et al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of S 2826, legislation that strengthens Rhode Island's education funding formula by increasing the student success factor for students experiencing poverty and providing additional support to districts serving high concentrations of poverty.

Educators understand that poverty significantly affects student learning and often requires additional academic interventions, behavioral supports, attendance initiatives, mental health services, multilingual programming, family engagement efforts, and wraparound supports. Students facing economic hardship frequently require additional resources to access the same educational opportunities as their peers.

The current student success factor reflects an important recognition that poverty impacts educational outcomes. However, districts serving concentrated poverty continue to experience significant challenges meeting student needs within existing funding structures. S2826 appropriately acknowledges these realities by increasing the student success factor from forty percent (40%) to forty-five percent (45%) and providing additional weighting for districts where more than forty-five percent (45%) of students experience poverty.

Communities with concentrated poverty often face compounded challenges including housing instability, food insecurity, chronic absenteeism, and increased demand for social-emotional and behavioral supports. Funding formulas should recognize these realities and direct resources accordingly.

Strengthening support for districts serving the highest concentrations of poverty is an investment in educational equity and student success. Public education funding should reflect student need and provide districts with the capacity to deliver the supports necessary for all students to thrive.

For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support S 2826.

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