



May 19, 2026

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

RE: SENATE BILL 2849 - AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- TRANSPORTATION OF SCHOOL PUPILS BEYOND CITY AND TOWN LIMITS

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 2849.

This legislation provides school districts and municipalities with additional flexibility in the delivery of student transportation services by allowing eligible local systems to utilize cost-effective transportation models while still receiving appropriate state reimbursement. The League views this approach as a constructive step toward improving efficiency, preserving local decision-making authority, and ensuring responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources.

Across Rhode Island, municipalities have continued to invest significant effort into maintaining safe, reliable, and fiscally sustainable student transportation systems. In some communities, local or contracted transportation arrangements may operate at a lower cost or better align with existing service structures than participation in a centralized statewide system. Senate Bill 2849 appropriately recognizes that a one-size-fits-all model may not reflect the operational realities of every district.

The League particularly supports the bill's emphasis on local flexibility and cost efficiency, as it allows municipalities to make transportation decisions based on local conditions, infrastructure, and vendor markets. This flexibility can help ensure that communities are not required to adopt more costly arrangements when viable alternatives exist.

At the same time, the League notes that implementation details will be important, particularly with respect to reimbursement methodology, documentation requirements, and administrative oversight. It will be important to monitor implementation to ensure the policy functions as intended across all municipalities and school districts. Clear and consistent guidance will be essential so that communities can fully realize the benefits of the legislation without unnecessary administrative burden.

Overall, Senate Bill 2849 represents a thoughtful effort to modernize school transportation policy in a way that balances state support with local control.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our perspective.

Sincerely,

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Finance Committee