



**DONALD R. GREBIEN  
MAYOR**



May 20, 2026

The Honorable Chairman Louis P. DiPalma  
Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: Support for S3015- An Act Relating to Education – The RI Education Funding and Accountability Act**

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

My name is Donald R. Grebien, and I am the Mayor of the City of Pawtucket. I write to express my strong support for **Senate Bill 3015**, the Rhode Island Education Funding and Accountability Act.

The Blue Ribbon Commission, convened by the Rhode Island Foundation and guided by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, brought together a diverse group of education and community leaders to study Rhode Island's school funding formula. I would like to thank David Cicilline, President and CEO of the Rhode Island Foundation, for his advocacy and leadership on behalf of Rhode Island's students.

Over the course of more than a year, the Commission engaged in a rigorous, data-driven process to develop a consensus set of recommendations aimed at creating a fair, equitable, and adequate school funding system for Rhode Island. The legislation before you is a direct reflection of that important work.

As Mayor of Pawtucket, I see every day how deeply education funding impacts not only our students, but the overall health and future of our city. Our schools are the heart of our community, and ensuring they are properly resourced is critical to sustaining and building upon the progress we have made. I am proud to support the Commission's efforts and the path forward it has outlined.

Rhode Island's current school funding system does not adequately or equitably support our students and communities. In Pawtucket, we face ongoing challenges tied to rising fixed costs that are not fully accounted for in the existing formula, particularly transportation, aging school infrastructure, and the increasing need for early childhood screening and support services.

Pawtucket currently spends \$21,839 per pupil, with 20 percent of students identified as multilingual learners and 20 percent as students with disabilities both above the statewide average. The Pawtucket School Department operates with an approximate annual operating budget of \$190 million, yet the demands placed on the district continue to grow.

At the same time, our district serves a high population of students with diverse and complex needs, including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. While we are proud of the work being done in our schools, the current funding structure does not sufficiently recognize or support the true cost of educating these students.

This often forces difficult local decisions, placing pressure on municipal budgets and limiting our ability to expand or sustain critical programs that directly benefit students and families.

This legislation offers a path forward. It is built on a comprehensive set of recommendations focused on four interconnected shifts:

1. Accounting for the full cost of education and sharing those costs more equitably expanding the formula to include costs such as transportation, building maintenance, and early childhood screening, while shifting unpredictable, high-cost expenses to the state.
2. Tailoring instructional costs to students needs more directly increasing funding for economically disadvantaged students, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students in high-cost career and technical education programs.
3. Ensuring greater predictability for municipalities requiring local contributions based on a community's ability to pay, creating consistency, stability, and fairness.
4. Requiring transparency and strategic management introducing accountability measures that tie spending to educational outcomes, including robust reporting and a tiered system of support for districts.

For Pawtucket, the shift toward both fully accounting for the cost of education and ensuring greater predictability for municipalities is particularly critical. These changes would allow us to better plan for the future, stabilize local budgets, and make sustained investments in our schools without the uncertainty that currently exists.


This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape how Rhode Island funds public education. In Pawtucket, we are working hard to move our city forward investing in economic development, housing, and quality of life but long-term success depends on strong, well-supported schools.

Our students and families cannot afford to wait. The need is real, and the time to act is now.

I respectfully urge the members of this Committee to move this legislation forward and take this important step toward building a school funding system that is fair, transparent, and effective for every child in Rhode Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your thoughtful consideration of this important legislation. I welcome any questions and would be happy to provide additional information.

Respectfully submitted,



Donald R. Grebien  
Mayor  
City of Pawtucket