



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
WOONSOCKET, RHODE ISLAND

May 20, 2026

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

***RE: Support of House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015***

Dear Chairman DiPalma:

I am writing to express support for [House Bill 8351/Senate Bill 3015], legislation that would enact the Blue-Ribbon Commission's recommendations to create a fair, transparent, and adequate public school funding system for Rhode Island.

The Commission's work represents one of the most thorough examinations of our state's education funding in more than a decade. Rhode Island has reached a pivotal moment, and we now have both the responsibility and the opportunity to modernize how we fund our schools. A comprehensive school funding system would establish the foundation necessary to meet the state's responsibility to its students and all Rhode Islanders — securing an effective, predictable, student-centered system that drives economic growth and enables all children to receive the world-class education they deserve.

The Commission's recommendations center on four key shifts:

- Account for the full cost of education by expanding the current formula into a comprehensive Core Education Amount (CEA) that includes transportation, building maintenance, early childhood services, and other essential costs currently borne by local municipalities alone.
- Tailor funding to student need, ensuring that dollars follow students based on instructional need through more accurate weights for economically disadvantaged students, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and those in high-cost CTE programs.

- Require local contributions aligned with each municipality's actual ability to pay, removing long-standing inequities caused by inconsistent local funding and outdated formulas.
- Improve fiscal responsibility and transparency, tying spending to student outcomes and supporting districts with oversight and technical assistance when needed.

The legislation addresses this issue directly. Under the proposal, RIDE would be required to provide preliminary state aid estimates by March 1 each year, giving municipalities and school districts the advance notice needed for responsible budget planning. The General Assembly would also have the option to authorize multi-year funding commitments, creating additional stability and predictability. State and municipal aid payments would be distributed quarterly – in July, October, January, and April – according to a consistent, reliable schedule.

Additionally, the legislation also establishes an important safeguard against future unfunded mandates. Any new state education requirement enacted after the law takes effect would be required to include both a fiscal impact statement and a dedicated state appropriation to cover implementation costs. This ensures that municipalities and school districts are not burdened with new mandates without the funding necessary to carry them out.

These recommendations would make the funding system more transparent, clear, and equitable. Importantly for municipalities, it includes improvements that make funding more predictable, allow for better budgetary planning, and — most importantly — ensure every student, regardless of ZIP code, has access to the education they deserve. We urge you to act now and not delay implementation.

Rhode Island's students, families, and communities cannot afford another year under a system that falls short of their needs. We urge you to champion these recommendations by passing House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015. Doing so will signal that you are standing with us in delivering the world-class education every Rhode Island child deserves.

Thank you for your commitment to Rhode Island's students and communities. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

  
Mayor Christopher Beauchamp