



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

To: House Education Committee

From: Frank Flynn, President

Date: April 15, 2024

Re: **School Emergency Drill Act**

Testimony in Support of H 8102 (Rep. Boylan, et. al.)

On behalf of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals I am writing to offer my strong support for House Bill 8102 The School Emergency Drill Act. I would like to thank Representative Boylan for her sponsorship of this important legislation. This bill is the product of a yearlong legislative study commission which evaluated mandatory safety protocols in Rhode Island public schools. The Commission was comprised of stakeholders from a variety of entities including, students, parents, educators, first responders, and legislators. The Commissioners were provided both oral and written testimony, from multiple sources, covering numerous perspectives.

We believe that the health and safety of all students and staff is our most important priority. As a classroom teacher for thirty-four years, I understand and appreciate the importance of school emergency drills and the need to prepare our students for unforeseen circumstances. As the complexity of school related emergencies has evolved to more than fire drills, so too, must our preparation. The Schools Emergency Drill Act is a logical response to situations which have occurred in recent years throughout our nation and the need to develop a comprehensive health and safety protocol.

Key elements of this bill include coordinating and collaborating activities with local first responders, mandatory training for both staff and students, and the development of an annual schedule, by locality, which incorporates all types of drills into a comprehensive schedule. All student training must be age appropriate and utilize trauma informed practices. The bill also creates a mechanism for administrators to allow accommodations and alternative safety education instruction for students whose needs warrant exclusion.

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals appreciates Representative Boylan's advocacy for this important legislation, and we urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Frank Flynn

President, R. I. Federation of Teachers, and Health Professionals

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