



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, *Secretary of State*

April 1, 2025

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara, Chair
House Committee on Education

RE: H5839 - An Act Relating to Education – Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

Dear Chair McNamara,

I write this letter in support of House Bill 5839, legislation that would allow the chair of the Student Advisory Council to be a voting member of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. This bill would also exempt students under the age of eighteen from any Senate Advice and Consent requirements.

As a former history and civics teacher for over 30 years, I know how crucial it is to educate our students on both our history and how to participate in our democracy. Our youth should be engaged in our democratic processes and should have the opportunity to participate fully when at all available.

A study from the Tufts Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement shows that the earlier high school youth are engaged in democratic processes, the higher the likelihood they will remain civically engaged later in life. Legitimizing our students' participation in the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education's Student Advisory Council will ensure that their voices are not only heard now but also support their lifelong civic engagement.

The Student Advisory Council serves as a platform for these democratic values. Student leaders have the opportunity to serve in the best interest of all students by advising the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education on educational policies and priorities.

Therefore, I urge the support of this Committee and the full House for House Bill 5839.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, at marias@sos.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Education
The Honorable David Morales