



To: Representative Joseph McNamara
Chair, House Education Committee

Topic: **Response to the "Dual Enrollment Equal Opportunity Act" Amendments:**

I am writing in opposition to the proposed amendments to the *Dual Enrollment Equal Opportunity Act*. Ensuring that all Rhode Island students have meaningful access to advanced educational opportunities in post-secondary school is of utmost importance for the future of Rhode Island. While the bill underscores the importance of student agency in shaping personalized academic pathways, to fully realize the principle of **equal opportunity**, it is crucial that the bill **explicitly includes access to both public and private institutions of higher education**.

Students deserve the right to pursue dual enrollment not only at public community colleges and universities but also at **eligible private institutions** that meet academic standards and accreditation requirements. Many private colleges and universities in Rhode Island offer unique programs, smaller class sizes, and specialized learning environments that may better align with the academic goals, learning styles, or career aspirations of individual students. **Excluding private institutions from the dual enrollment framework inadvertently limits student choice**, particularly for those seeking niche fields of study or institutions with strong support systems for diverse learners.

Additionally, inclusion of **private institutions** can foster innovation, increase competition, and provide more options for students from various socioeconomic backgrounds, especially when paired with state-supported financial assistance or tuition waivers. By maintaining access to private institutions as well as public institutions, Rhode Island will offer a **more inclusive and robust dual enrollment ecosystem** that reflects the full spectrum of the state's higher education landscape.

While the creation of a workgroup is a commendable provision, its membership should include representatives from **both public and private higher education institutions**, alongside educators, families, and community advocates. This ensures that the statewide dual enrollment policy is balanced, equitable, and representative of the diverse needs of Rhode Island's student population.

In conclusion, for the *Dual Enrollment Equal Opportunity Act* to truly honor its name and intent, it must protect and promote **students' freedom to choose the postsecondary environment that best fits their aspirations**—whether public or private. This inclusive approach will empower students, increase college readiness, and foster a culture of educational excellence and equity across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas H. Sherman, Jr.", is written over a horizontal line.

Douglas H. Sherman, Jr., Ed.D.
Senior Vice President and Provost

CC: Speaker K Joseph Shekarchi,
CC: Nicole McCarthy, Chief Legal Counsel, House Speaker's Office