

April 10, 2025

The Honorable Joseph McNamara  
Chair, House Committee on Education  
State House  
Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

H 6058: An Act Relating to Education: Dual Enrollment Equal Opportunity Act

Dear Chairman McNamara;

As the presidents of Rhode Island's three public institutions of higher education—the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), Rhode Island College (RIC), and the University of Rhode Island (URI)—we write to express our strong support for House Bill H6058 and express gratitude for the sponsors commitment to providing access and opportunity to Rhode Island students. This legislation represents a thoughtful and strategic investment in early college access for Rhode Island's students, while reinforcing the vital role of our state's public colleges and university in delivering these opportunities equitably and with quality assurance.

Decades of national research demonstrate the power of early college to transform student trajectories. Early college participants are more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in college, and complete a postsecondary degree. According to a study by the American Institutes for Research, early college students earned associate degrees at nearly three times the rate of their peers and were significantly more likely to go on to earn bachelor's degrees.

These benefits are especially pronounced for students who have been historically underserved by higher education systems—first-generation college students, students of color, and low-income students. By allowing students to earn college credits while still in high school, early college programs reduce the time and cost required to complete a degree, help students gain confidence and momentum, and accelerate their path to meaningful careers.

Rhode Island's public colleges and university are uniquely positioned to deliver early college programs that meet statewide standards, ensure credit transferability, and align with the academic and workforce goals of the state. As public institutions, we are guided by a shared mission of access, equity, and economic mobility, and we are accountable to the students, families, and communities we serve.

The private colleges and universities are valued partners in our state's education ecosystem; however, we firmly believe that when it comes to delivering publicly funded early college programs, public institutions offer a statewide infrastructure and a mandate to serve all Rhode Islanders that make them the right and most effective delivery system.

We also write in support of this legislation at a time when public colleges and universities nationwide are under increasing pressure. Federal policy shifts, rising costs, and changing public perceptions have placed new strain on the institutions that have long served as gateways to opportunity and economic advancement. At this critical moment, Rhode Island has an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to public higher education as a public good—one that expands access, narrows equity gaps, and fuels the economic engine of our state.

By investing in early college through CCRI, RIC, and URI, Rhode Island is not only increasing access—it is also investing in the sustainability and strength of the very institutions that make access possible. This is a powerful and future-focused strategy to grow our college-going culture, retain talent in-state, and support students from high school through college completion and into careers.

We believe deeply in the transformative potential of early college, and we believe that Rhode Island's public higher education institutions are the best partners to bring that potential to scale. House Bill H6058 strengthens this work, builds on successful models already in place, and ensures that early college access continues to serve students with excellence, equity, and purpose.

We respectfully urge your support for this important legislation, and we stand ready to collaborate on its successful implementation.

Sincerely,



Dr. Rosemary A. Costigan  
Interim President  
Community College of Rhode Island



Dr. Jack R. Warner  
President  
Rhode Island College



Dr. Marc Parlange  
President  
University of Rhode Island