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To Members of the House Finance Committee:

As a Rhode Islander who gladly returned to Providence last year, after living for more than 30 years in Texas, I was disappointed and shocked that Rhode Island numbers lag significantly behind Harris County, Texas in terms of teachers of color relative to the population of students of color. This does not comport with Rhode Island as a progressive and forward thinking state.

I am writing to express my support for H7771, "Making an Appropriation of \$500,000 to the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner for the Rhode Island School for Progressive Education," and I am asking you to do the same. Continuing to fund RISPE beyond the 2024 fiscal year is the obvious right choice for Rhode Island.

I know you have received letters citing the importance of teachers of color and the effect that learning from persons who "look like me" has on the futures of students of color. RISPE goals serve to foster the important results of students learning from persons who have a huge impact upon their abilities and goals.

The decision before you as it pertains to this specific piece of legislation represents an opportunity for Rhode Island to further define itself as a state that considers public education of an outstanding quality a human right. This is an opportunity to show that Rhode Island is willing to take bold steps to strengthen public K-12 education and close staggering equity and achievement gaps, specifically for our students of color and students living in urban, high-poverty communities.

In closing, Rhode Island's children are relying on us to improve our public schools, and the education our kids receive in public schools will be a determining factor in the success or failure of their entire lives. Your support for H7771 proves your willingness to take bold action to achieve this goal.

I know we can do better than Texas!

Sincerely,

