



220 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02908

14 May 2024

The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chair  
House Finance Committee  
Room 35, 82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02908  
[housefinance@rilegislature.gov](mailto:housefinance@rilegislature.gov)

Chair Abney and members of the House Finance Committee:

The Rhode Island Black Business Association is a business and economic development nonprofit that works to close the racial wealth gap in Rhode Island. We submit this letter in strong support of H7771, "Making an Appropriation of \$500,000 to the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner for the Rhode Island School for Progressive Education". Continuing to fund RISPE beyond the 2024 fiscal year is the obvious right choice for Rhode Island and for our students. H7771 will 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. Education is workforce development, and this bill helps ensure that all students receive the best education possible

Rhode Island is a diverse state. Our public-school districts desperately want and need a pipeline of teachers of color that champions anti-racist, transformational curriculum and teacher training. RISPE accomplishes this and more in its express mission is close equity gaps in the classroom, thereby breaking down the barriers of systemic racism and the resulting inequity that prevents BIPOC students from reaching their full potential. Cities like Boston, New York, and Chicago have implemented similar programs with great success that can be replicated in RI by supporting RISPE.

Since its founding, the need and support for RISPE in our community has only gotten more intense resonance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and amid a growing teacher shortage. In collaboration with Rhode Island's urban public schools, RISPE will diversify the educator workforce, close equity gaps, and further our shared goal of ensuring every student in Rhode Island, no matter their race or what neighborhood they live in, has access to a high-quality public education. If properly equipped, RISPE can change the lives of chronically underserved children in Rhode Island for the better and create opportunities for aspiring teachers of color to enter the field.

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. RIBBA urges the committee to give H7771 your full support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KCF", enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

Kristina Contreras Fox, Director of Policy & Advocacy

[kristina@ribba.org](mailto:kristina@ribba.org) | 401.424.1635