



April 29, 2024

Chair Marvin L. Abney  
House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House, Providence, RI 02903

**Re: RI League of Women Voters supports H7036 – Civics Education Funding**

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island strongly supports H7036 which would establish a new funding category for civics education and a related fund to provide for the dollars and resources necessary to support the effective teaching of civics in our Rhode Island schools.

The League believes that civics education is crucial for democracy to flourish. Such education is more important today than ever. Democracy is currently under attack in this country. Many voters and non-voters are feeling powerless and frustrated. Too often they don't understand the workings of government and don't believe their own actions can make a difference. Civics education in our public schools is key to capturing the next generation of voters and educating them as to how they can get involved – and why they should.

In 2021 the RI legislators passed the *Civics Literacy Act* which became a requirement for all RI students in grades 8-12 this year. The semester requirement is the first step to adequately prepare RI students in civics. Unfortunately, the final legislation did not include funding for teacher training or new curriculum resources. Without such funding, this requirement poses many new challenges for teaching.

RI schools currently lack civics teachers, curriculum materials, and money for training. If students are to be actively engaged in our democracy, they need not only an understanding of the history and knowledge of our governmental institutions, but also related experience and skills. And more students from diverse backgrounds need to be included. Without funding, the *Civic Literacy Act* will not be effective. It is an unfunded mandate.

**H7036** addresses these concerns by establishing a civics education fund to directly support teacher training and access to high quality civic resources.

The slogan of the League of Women Voters is “Empowering Voters - Defending Democracy.” The League strives to do both, largely through advocacy and education. Public schools that provide comprehensive civics education to students before they become of voting age can set the stage for their later participation in democracy.

The League urges you to pass H7036 this session. and thus empower Rhode Island schools to prepare the next generation of voters to engage in and defend our democracy.

Thank you,

*Diana (Donnie) McGee*

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