

Testimony from Jessica Purcell in Support of H7206, H7207, and H7687

April 29, 2024

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

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Jessica Purcell and I live in Richmond, RI. I have two young children who attend Richmond Elementary School and are future Chariho graduates.

The regional school district of Chariho spans three towns and over 100 square miles. We have four elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, one career-tech center, and one alternative learning academy. These schools provide educational opportunities to students that live in the district as well as to others who travel here by bus from out of district.

Bus transportation is crucial to our regional district and is the safest way to ensure that children arrive at school on-time every day. The state funding formula awards our district with categorical transportation aid but we have not always received full funding from the state, and the timelines of developing our school budget do not line up with the state budget. **H7206** would help this problem by mandating that the state fully fund categorical transportation aid.

Related to the cost of transportation, there are also instances where students require transportation into our district from other areas of the state. **H7687** would provide Chariho and other districts increased flexibility in funding these instances. The Chariho administration would benefit from increasing the pool of possible transportation providers outside of the state system because it could save money and increase efficiency of services.

I also support **H7207**, which would provide Chariho with a regionalization bonus of 6% of the state's share of the foundation education aid. Unlike the current version of this act, the 6% would be ongoing and continuous without an expiration date.

These additions to The Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act would further the purpose of the act itself, and be a benefit to the students and residents of the Chariho region. Rural communities like ours provide the majority of school funding through our property taxes in part because we do not have a large base of taxable business that offset the burden. We deserve additional investment from our state government.

Thank you for your time as you consider these bills that will improve funding to regional school districts, and support our communities.

Respectfully,
Jessica Purcell
Richmond, RI