

## Chris O'Brien

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**From:** BKM <bkmaloney@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 9:01 AM  
**To:** House Finance Committee  
**Subject:** HB 8149

Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Brian Maloney.

I have two school aged children, and have been employed as a teacher at Cumberland High School since 2002. As a resident of Warwick, I am represented by David Bennett.

Unfortunately, I cannot be present to speak directly with you on Tuesday, May 7th, and hope that my words find receptive minds.

I'd like to thank Representative Edwards for House Bill 8149 and I support amending this bill to include educators along with public officers and employees.

You have likely heard or read personal stories involving how teaching is a calling, and have had colleagues of mine asking you to support them having a dignified retirement, but I am not writing for that purpose. My purpose is to ask you to help stanch a growing problem for education in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island's institutions of higher learning have historically produced more educators than the state required, and were ripe grounds for other states seeking teachers. Upon graduation, I was recruited by school systems from as far away as North Carolina, but chose to stay in Rhode Island. Today though, Rhode Island no longer produces teachers in adequate numbers.

According to the Pew Research Center, the number of bachelor's degrees in education conferred by postsecondary institutions has dropped by more than fifty-two percent since 1971. In that same timeframe, the population of the United States has increased from 203 million to over 325 million people, an increase of approximately sixty percent. This is a national crisis.

Americans are speaking very clearly with their choices. Our citizens simply are not interested in careers in education.

According to the [Annenberg Institute at Brown University](#), there are currently 55,000 unfilled, full-time, teaching positions in America in 2024. Further, more than 400 of those positions are in Rhode Island. This number does not include the nearly 700 "under qualified" persons currently teaching in Rhode Island.

In order to find the teacher's Rhode Island needs to educate our children, the job needs to be attractive.

You are likely aware that salaries and retirement benefits are better in neighboring Connecticut, and Massachusetts. This provides little incentive for people to teach in Rhode Island. To combat this, we must increase teachers' salaries and benefits to both attract qualified candidates, and to keep those we have from making the short and economically sound drive to Connecticut or Massachusetts.

Supporting HB8149 and including teachers is a step towards making teaching in Rhode Island more tenable and I call upon you to do so.

If we do not address the issues dissuading people from entering education in Rhode Island - unattractive pay, decreased pensions, increased workloads, lack of staffing, lack of funding, aging infrastructure, lack of student mental health programs, increased social tension, and many, many more - the shortfall of teachers in the state will only increase and more under qualified persons will be pressed into service in our schools. This is a recipe for failure.

I thank you for your consideration, and again urge you to support HB8149 and its amendment, and to view it as a starting point in addressing our teacher shortage, and not a solution.

Respectfully,

Brian Maloney  
Cumberland High School