



Association of Independent
Colleges & Universities of Rhode Island

50 Park Row West, Suite 100, Providence, RI 02903 | 401.272.8270 | aicuri.org

March 25, 2025

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chairman, House Committee on Finance
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney,

On behalf of the membership, AICU Rhode Island, I write to support the Officer of Post-Secondary Commissioner's budget in the FY'26 State Budget. In particular, we **strongly support** the section funding the State Student Aid program (also known as the Rhode Island Promise I Scholarship Program).

The State Student Aid program assists thousands of Rhode Island students attending college in the state by providing scholarship dollars for those that attend Rhode Island institutions of higher education; bettering the lives of students, supporting the higher education sector, and providing a steady stream of talented individuals for the Rhode Island economy.

Since its inception, the state has awarded approximately \$18 million in student aid, which has been matched dollar-for-dollar by our member institutions, results in nearly more than \$34 million in aid since 2015. From 2015 to 2020, students at independent institutions of higher education received \$2 million of funding annually. State funding for students at independent institutions was cut to \$1.5 million in 2020. Thanks to the efforts of the General Assembly leadership, the program was funded at **\$1.8 million in the FY'26 budget**.

Understanding that this is a challenging budget year, we appreciate the Governor's commitment to supporting students in Rhode Island. However, in an increasingly precarious economy, more is needed to successfully support Rhode Island students. We respectfully ask the House Finance Committee to consider restoring funding to \$2 million, which the program was originally funded at prior to the pandemic.

Increasing funding will also allow Rhode Island institutions to be more competitive relative to regional peers. Rhode Island's State Student Aid program lags our neighbors and leads to students from Rhode Island leaving the state to attend college out of state because the aid package is more competitive. The result of this could be a permanent loss of a talented and highly educated workforce for the state.

With these points in mind, AICU *Rhode Island* **strongly supports** the proposed funding of the State Student Aid Program and requests an increase to pre-pandemic levels in the FY'26 State Budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Egan", written over a white background.

Daniel P. Egan
President



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