



March 21, 2024

Chair Robert E. Craven, Sr.
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H-7575 – Affirmative Defense of Educators

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women (RI NOW) supports H-7575 to protect schools, museums, and libraries against unnecessary lawsuits and penalties aimed at censoring their content with educational value, by establishing their vital roles as an affirmative defense against unjustified litigation. We should always take the opportunity to support our educational institutions to encourage young people to read what interests them and seek out new information.

As there is a growing movement to censor any material featuring themes and perspectives on sex, gender, and race throughout the country by claiming them to be inappropriate, it has become necessary that we strengthen protections against what constitutes obscene material. There are more and more attempts to suppress BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ content to prevent young people from understanding the world around them and target marginalized communities enriched with diversity and culture. This bill would further strengthen protections against such hateful and discriminatory attacks.

44 other states have implemented laws with similar language, including every other state in New England. Rhode Island is an outlier and we should update the language of our laws to meet the standard already set by much of the country to support and defend our librarians and educators from unwarranted censorship, frivolous lawsuits, and hostile working environments. RI NOW supports passage of H-7575 and we strongly urge you to pass it out of committee and bring it to the floor for a vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Lesley Bunnell
President
RI NOW



Giona Picheco
Legislative Chair
RI NOW

Rhode Island National Organization for Women (RI NOW) is a membership-based advocacy organization with hundreds of members and supporters throughout the state of Rhode Island. Our mission is to take action to bring women into full participation in all aspects of public and private life without experiencing barriers based on gender. Our key issue areas include economic equity, ending violence against women, reproductive health and justice, 2SLGBTQIA+ civil rights, and ending racism.