



H 7396 FOR

Chairman Evan P. Shanley

March 13, 2024

House Committee on State Government and Elections, Rhode Island State House

League of Women Voters of RI, Supports H 7396, The Right to an Adequate Education Act

Honorable Chair Shanley and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island and as a 33-year educator of academically-at-risk students, I urge you to support House Bill 7396: The Right to an Adequate Education Act. This joint resolution proposes a constitutional amendment that “guarantees Rhode Island residents with an equal opportunity to receive an education that is adequate, equitable and meaningful and provides judicial enforcement of this provision.”

Guaranteeing such an education to all Rhode Island students will promote self-sufficient, productive citizens as well as prosperous communities. Today we are educating the next generation of nurses, engineers, teachers, tech specialists, business owners, and trade professionals. Education is key to ensure that pathways to self-sufficiency and careers like these are accessible to all. How can we expect cities and towns and their related economies to thrive if there’s no guarantee these students will be appropriately educated and prepared for the future?

Rhode Island’s Education Funding Formula was established to equalize the playing field for all students regardless of their household income or community’s wealth. But when funding is not distributed equitably and academic resources are lacking, students are being short-changed. And that inequity can fail the student for years to come and perhaps a lifetime. Such inequity also fails our communities. Fortunately, the judicial enforcement clause of H 7396 provides for accountability and puts backbone behind this right to an adequate and equitable education.

Three years ago, I moved to Rhode Island and learned my new state’s constitution does not guarantee a basic right to an adequate education. Yet many state constitutions in this country do include a comparable provision. Isn’t it time for Rhode Island to do the same? The judicial enforcement provision of this resolution can make equal opportunity for an equitable education a more likely reality for every child. Our students and our communities will be the richer for it.

The League of Woman Voters of Rhode Island urges you to vote this resolution out of committee and send it to the House Floor with a recommendation to pass H 7396.

Thank you,

Diana (Donnie) McGee

Diana (Donnie) McGee, LWVRI Advocacy Committee Cochair

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