



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT AFL-CIO

To: House State Government and Elections Committee
From: James Parisi, Field Representative
Date: March 14, 2024
Re: **Constitutional Right to an Adequate Education**
Testimony in **support** of 2024-H 7396 (Rep. Messier et al.)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Parisi', is written over the 'From' and 'Date' lines of the letterhead.

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals supports H 7396 and appreciates Representative Messier's persistence on this issue. The legislation would put a question on the ballot for voter approval to enshrine the right to an *"equitable, adequate and meaningful education to each child."*

The RIFTHP represents 12,000 members, including thousands of educators and school paraprofessionals working in underfunded urban and suburban schools. Rhode Island's education trajectory would have been more like Massachusetts had this right been in our constitution three decades ago when court cases related to school funding ruled against the interests of public education for Rhode Island youth.

The RIFTHP welcomes immediate action by the General Assembly to revise our education funding system to provide equitable and adequate resources for all students. Rhode Island still over-relies on local funding to support education, a system that could change with enactment of this constitutional rights. Absent immediate action to improve our funding formula significantly to reduce the over-reliance on local property taxes, the RIFTHP supports creating a constitutional right to education.

The RIFTHP urges you to support H 7396 to permit voters to consider this constitutional question in November.

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