



August 23, 2024

Constitutional Convention Commission
Co-Chair Representative Robert Craven, Sr.
Co-Chair Senator Dawn Euer

RE: Opposition to the Constitutional Convention

Dear Commissioners,

The National Education Association Rhode Island stands in firm opposition to holding a Constitutional Convention.

We represent educators who teach kindergarten through college and state and municipal employees. No one knows better than educators and public employees the fundamental importance of a functional democracy.

We oppose the Convention because it opens the door for wealthy out-of-state interests to undermine the civil rights of our fellow Rhode Islanders.

There are no limits to how much out-of-state corporate spending could be unleashed; both during the ballot question campaign for the convention, and for each amendment put to the voters. There is nothing that binds the convention to hearing input from the public, nothing that ensures they must hold their debates openly and transparently. We fear the prospect of a convention crafting questions to constrict or strip away fundamental freedoms. Among these: the freedom to teach our students lessons grounded in facts and history, the freedom to organize a union, the freedom to make decisions about our own bodies, and the freedom to love openly and truly. We need only look to other states and the results of the last convention to know that our fears are not merely phantoms, but real and present threats.

Additionally, we already have a clear path to make changes to the RI Constitution by having questions placed on the ballot by the General Assembly.

We urge you to recommend to the voters of Rhode Island to reject the Convention, rather than waste millions of dollars on a fundamentally flawed attempt to enshrine in our constitution the failed policies that corporate interests cannot move through the regular, open legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary K. Barden".

Mary Barden
Executive Director
National Education Association Rhode Island