

2026 -- H 8351 SUBSTITUTE A AS AMENDED

LC006182/SUB A

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

JOINT RESOLUTION

CREATING A SPECIAL JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY RHODE ISLAND'S EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA AND EDUCATION FINANCE SYSTEM

Introduced By: Representatives McNamara, Cortvriend, Ackerman, Tanzi, Kislak, Ajello, Furtado, J. Brien, Sanchez, and Phillips

Date Introduced: March 25, 2026

Referred To: House Finance

1 WHEREAS, Rhode Island's public education system is essential to the economic vitality,
2 civic health, and long-term prosperity of the state;

3 WHEREAS, Since the adoption of Rhode Island's current education funding formula in
4 2010, school districts and municipalities have experienced significant changes in enrollment
5 patterns and student needs;

6 WHEREAS, Inflation, rising operational costs, and increasing expenditures related to
7 transportation, multilingual learner services, special education, pension obligations, and other
8 educational needs have placed significant fiscal pressures on school districts and municipalities
9 across Rhode Island;

10 WHEREAS, The Rhode Island Foundation convened a Blue Ribbon Commission on
11 Education Funding, composed of educators, municipal leaders, policymakers, advocates,
12 researchers, and community stakeholders, to evaluate Rhode Island's education funding system
13 and develop recommendations for modernization;

14 WHEREAS, The Commission recommended a student-centered system with an expanded
15 definition of educational costs within the funding formula, revised student weighting
16 mechanisms, increased state participation in certain education expenses, a required and defined
17 local share of costs, and expanded accountability and transparency measures; and

18 WHEREAS, Modernization of the education funding formula must be pursued in a
19 manner that is equitable, fiscally responsible, and sustainable for both the State and local

1 communities; now, therefore be it

2 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created
3 consisting of sixteen (16) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the Rhode Island
4 Senate, at least one of whom shall be a member of the minority party, to be appointed by the
5 President of the Senate; three (3) of whom shall be members of the Rhode Island House of
6 Representatives, at least one of whom shall be a member of the minority party, to be appointed by
7 the Speaker of the House of Representatives; one of whom shall be the Executive Director of the
8 National Education Association Rhode Island, or designee; one of whom shall be the President of
9 the American Federation of Teachers Rhode Island, or designee; one of whom shall be the
10 Commissioner of the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or
11 designee; one of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode Island Office of Management and
12 Budget, or designee; one of whom shall be the Senior Advisor for Education to the Rhode Island
13 Governor, or designee; one of whom shall be the Executive Director of the Rhode Island
14 Association of School Committees, or designee; one of whom shall be the Executive Director of
15 the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association, or designee; one of whom shall be the
16 President of the Rhode Island Association of School Business Officials, or designee; one of
17 whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island Government Finance Officers Association, or
18 designee; and one of whom shall be the Director of the Division of Municipal Finance, or
19 designee.

20 The purpose of said commission shall be to make a comprehensive study of Rhode
21 Island's education funding formula and education finance system, including, but not limited to:

22 (1) Studying the feasibility of implementing the recommendations contained in the Rhode
23 Island Foundation's Blue Ribbon Commission Report, *Equalizing Opportunity: Creating a Fair
24 and Transparent Funding System for Rhode Island's Public Schools*;

25 (i) Evaluating the associated statutory recommendations and recommending measures
26 and weights not specified in the report; and

27 (ii) Comparing the total costs of the proposed system to the current system, including
28 multiple total state share amounts as presented by the commission, using the most recent
29 complete year of finalized and validated Uniform Charter of Accounts (UCOA) revenue and
30 expenditure data;

31 (2) Evaluating the adequacy, equity, predictability, and long-term fiscal sustainability of
32 Rhode Island's education funding formula, including the impact of declining enrollment, rising
33 educational costs, and differing levels of municipal fiscal capacity;

34 (3) Developing recommendations for modifications to Rhode Island's education funding

1 formula consistent with the educational and fiscal needs of the State and its municipalities; and

2 (4) Proposing a transition plan not to exceed five (5) fiscal years, specifying annual
3 adjustments to state and municipal shares to achieve full implementation of the recommendations.

4 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the Speaker of the House and the President of
5 the Senate shall designate the chair of the commission, and at the call of the chair, shall meet not
6 later than October 31, 2026.

7 The Commission shall meet regularly and may solicit input from stakeholders, including
8 the Rhode Island Foundation, the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, Blue Ribbon
9 Commission members, community members, educators, and financial experts.

10 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,
11 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or
12 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

13 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.
14 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

15 The commission may receive such funding and administrative support as may be
16 necessary to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

17 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide
18 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That the commission shall submit an interim report of its findings and
20 recommendations to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the
21 President of the Senate no later than March 2, 2027; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the commission shall submit a final report of its findings and
23 recommendations to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the
24 President of the Senate no later than September 1, 2027, and said commission shall expire on
25 December 1, 2027.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
JOINT RESOLUTION
CREATING A SPECIAL JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY RHODE
ISLAND'S EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA AND EDUCATION FINANCE SYSTEM

- 1 This Joint Resolution would create a special joint legislative commission to make a
- 2 comprehensive study of Rhode Island's education funding formula and education finance system.
- 3 This commission would submit a final report of its findings no later than September 1, 2027, and
- 4 would expire on December 1, 2027.

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