



February 11, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: CCRI's GO Bond Request for the Workforce Innovation Center

I am writing to express strong support for the Community College of Rhode Island's proposed General Obligation bond to construct the Workforce Innovation Center, a project that will expand workforce training opportunities for Rhode Islanders and strengthen our state's overall economic health.

NEARI represents the vast majority of workers at CCRI: full time and adjunct faculty, professional staff, and educational support staff.

The Workforce Innovation Center is an investment in Rhode Island and its residents. As an organization committed to public education, workforce opportunity, and economic mobility, we know how transformative it is when Rhode Islanders have access to high-quality education and training without barriers. CCRI plays a vital role in this work, and the college remains the most accessible entry point into short-term workforce training and postsecondary education for residents.

Today, we need new pathways that help individuals gain credentials more quickly. The Workforce Innovation Center will allow CCRI to meet Rhode Islanders where they are by offering fast-track credentials, hands-on training, and career-aligned programs that lead directly to good jobs.

For generations, CCRI has educated and trained the people who keep Rhode Island running. This new Center will expand that legacy by ensuring that students have a clear path to a rewarding, family-sustaining career.

We urge you to support this bond request. It represents a meaningful investment in equity, opportunity, and economic mobility for Rhode Islanders across all communities.

Sincerely,

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

Mary K. Barden
Executive Director
National Education Association Rhode Island