

Advocacy Toolkit: Fair Funding for Rhode Island's Schools

Empowering Rhode Islanders to contact their elected officials to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015

This toolkit is designed for anyone who wants to urge Rhode Island's General Assembly to pass fair school funding reform. Whether you're a parent, teacher, business owner, neighbor, or community leader, your voice matters. Lawmakers listen to their constituents. Use the messages below as-is or personalize them with your own story.

To find your State Representative and State Senator, visit: vote.sos.ri.gov then click 'find your elected officials'

Talking Points: Know What You're Asking For

Rhode Island's school funding formula hasn't been fundamentally updated in 15 years. How much is invested in a child's education depends too heavily on where they live, not what they need to succeed.

Costs like transportation, building upkeep, and early childhood screening fall entirely on municipalities, regardless of their ability to pay.

Students who need extra support, including English language learners and students with disabilities, often don't receive adequate resources.

School administrators must make major budget decisions without knowing their state funding until the last minute, making long-term planning nearly impossible.

The Solution: Four Reforms, One Clear Consensus

The Blue Ribbon Commission, 18 Rhode Island leaders including educators, parents, municipal officials, union representatives, charter school supporters, and community advocates, spent a year studying Rhode Island's school funding and reached a full consensus on four reforms.



Fund the Full Cost of Education

Costs like transportation, building upkeep, and early childhood screening currently fall entirely on municipalities. The state should share these costs fairly so local budgets aren't strained by expenses that benefit all students statewide.



Require Fair Local Contributions

Every community should invest in its schools based on its actual financial capacity – not an outdated, overly complex formula that doesn't reflect what towns and cities can realistically afford.



Fund Students Based on Their Actual Needs

Students who are economically disadvantaged, English language learners, or have disabilities require more support to succeed. The funding formula should reflect that reality – directing more resources to those who need them most.



Require Transparency and Accountability

Every education dollar should be traceable to student outcomes. This means public reporting and independent oversight so families, educators, and taxpayers can see how funds are being used and whether they're making a difference.

The ask: Urge your State Representative and State Senator to support **House Bill 8351** and **Senate Bill 3015** that enacts the Blue Ribbon Commissions recommendations into law.

1. Email Templates

Select a template below. Personalize with your name, town, and any personal story – then send to your legislators.

Template A- General Constituent

Subjectline:

Please support fair school funding reform in Rhode Island

Dear Representative/Senator *[Last Name]*,

I am a constituent writing to urge your support for school funding reform based on the recommendations of Rhode Island's Blue Ribbon Commission.

Our current school funding formula is 15 years old and no longer serves our students fairly. A child's access to a quality education should not depend on their zip code, and right now, it too often does.

The Blue Ribbon Commission, made up of educators, parents, community leaders, and municipal officials from across our state, spent a year studying this problem and reached a rare consensus on how to fix it. Their recommendations would ensure the full cost of education is shared fairly between the state and municipalities, that students with the greatest needs receive adequate support, and that every education dollar is spent transparently and accountably.

I am asking you to stand with Rhode Island's children and support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015 to make these recommendations law. Our students and families cannot afford to wait.

Thank you for your service and your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Town]

[Your Contact Information]

Template B- Parent/Family

Subjectline:

My child deserves a fair shot – please support school funding reform

Dear Representative/Senator *[Last Name]*,

My name is **[Name]** and I am a parent/grandparent/guardian in **[Town]**. I am writing because I care deeply about the quality of education my child receives, and I believe you do too.

Rhode Island's school funding system is not working for families like mine. The way we fund our public schools is outdated and inequitable. Districts struggle to afford basic services. Students who need extra support, including English language learners and children with disabilities, aren't receiving adequate resources. And school administrators are forced to make major budget decisions without knowing their state funding until the last minute.

Last year, the Blue Ribbon Commission released a comprehensive plan to fix this. Eighteen leaders from across Rhode Island – including educators, parents, municipal officials, and advocates – agreed on a path forward. Now it's time for the General Assembly to act.

As your constituent and as a parent, I am asking you to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015 that enacts the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations into law. Every child in Rhode Island deserves a fair, well-funded education, and that starts with getting the funding formula right.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Town]

Template C- Educator or School Staff

Subjectline:

As an educator, I'm asking for your support on school funding reform

Dear Representative/Senator *[Last Name]*,

I am a **[teacher/principal/counselor/school staff member]** in **[Town/District]**, and I am writing to ask for your support for school funding reform based on the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations.

Every day, I see firsthand how funding inequities affect students. **[Optional: Add a brief personal observation, e.g., "I work with English language learners who don't have adequate support because our district simply doesn't have the resources." or "Our building hasn't had major repairs in years because those costs fall entirely on our municipality."]**

The Blue Ribbon Commission has laid out a clear, evidence-based plan to modernize how Rhode Island funds its public schools – one that accounts for the true cost of educating all students, directs more resources to those with the greatest needs, and holds districts accountable for results.

As someone who has dedicated my career to Rhode Island's children, I am asking you to act. Please support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015 to enact the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations. Our students and our schools are counting on you.

With respect and appreciation,

[Your Name]

[Your School/District]

[Your town]

Template D- Business or Civic Leader

Subjectline:

Fair school funding is an economic imperative for Rhode Island

Dear Representative/Senator *[Last Name]*,

I am writing as a **[business owner/civic leader/community member]** in **[Town]** to urge your support for school funding reform based on the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission.

Rhode Island's long-term economic competitiveness depends on the quality of our public education system. Research is clear: investments in education yield significant economic returns – for individuals, for communities, and for the state as a whole. Yet our current funding system is inequitable, opaque, and holding Rhode Island back.

The Blue Ribbon Commission, a diverse body of 18 leaders that reached full consensus after a year of study, has presented a framework to modernize how we fund our schools. It would share costs more fairly between the state and municipalities, direct resources to students who need them most, and establish real accountability for how education dollars are spent.

This is smart policy and smart economics. I urge you to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015 enacting these recommendations and to help build the Rhode Island of the future.

Thank you,

[Your Name]

[Your organization/Business, if applicable]

[Your Town]

2. Phone Call Scripts

A two-minute phone call makes a real impact. Use these scripts when calling your legislators' offices.

Script A – Short & Direct (Under 2 Minutes)

When someone answers or you reach voicemail: "Hello, my name is [Name] and I'm a constituent calling from [Town]. I'm calling to urge [Representative/Senator Name] to support school funding reform based on the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations. Rhode Island's school funding formula is outdated and inequitable – and 18 community leaders from across our state have agreed on a plan to fix it. I'm asking [Representative/Senator Name] to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015 which make those recommendations law and ensure every Rhode Island child has access to a fairly funded education. Thank you, and I'd welcome a call back at [phone number] if the office has any questions."

Script B – If You Reach a Staff Member

Staff member: "Thank you for calling, can I take a message?"

"Yes, thank you. My name is [Name], I'm a constituent from [Town]. I'm calling to urge the [Representative/Senator] to support legislation based on the Blue Ribbon Commission's school funding recommendations. The current formula is 15 years old and leaves too many students behind. The Commission, made up of educators, parents, and community leaders, has a clear plan to fix it, and I'm asking [him/her/them] to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015. I'd really appreciate a response. My number is [phone number]. Thank you."

3. Social Media Templates

Tag your State Representative and State Senator when you post.

POST 1 – PERSONAL / EMOTIONAL

Our schools deserve better. Rhode Island's school funding formula is 15 years old and it's leaving kids behind, especially those who need the most support. The Blue Ribbon Commission has a plan to fix it. I'm calling on @[YourRepresentative] and @[YourSenator] to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015.

POST 2 – ACTION-ORIENTED

Have you contacted your RI state rep or senator about fair school funding? The Blue Ribbon Commission released a roadmap for fixing our broken education funding system, and now it's up to the General Assembly to act. Find your legislators at vote.sos.ri.gov and ask them to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015.

POST 3 – FOR EDUCATORS

As an educator in Rhode Island, I see every day how funding inequities affect my students. I'm urging @[YourRepresentative] and @[YourSenator] to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015, the Blue Ribbon Commission's school funding recommendations. Our kids can't wait.

POST 4 – FOR PARENTS

My [son/daughter/child] goes to school in [Town name of public school]. They deserve the same quality of education as any kid in Rhode Island, no matter our zip code. I'm asking my legislators to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015, which ensure fair school funding reform. Will you join me?

4. In-Person & Community Meeting Talking Points

Use these if you're attending a town hall, school committee meeting, community event, or meeting with your legislator in person.

OPENING

"Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is [Name] and I live in [Town]. I'm here to urge your support for school funding reform based on the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations."

THE PROBLEM

~30 seconds

"Rhode Island's current school funding formula is 15 years old. It doesn't account for the true cost of educating our kids, it places an unfair burden on many municipalities, and it doesn't adequately support students who need extra help – like English language learners or students with disabilities."

THE SOLUTION

~30 seconds

"Last year, 18 RI leaders – educators, parents, municipal officials, advocates – spent a year studying this and reached full consensus on a path forward. Their plan would share costs more fairly, fund students based on their actual needs, and require real accountability for how dollars are spent."

THE ASK

~15 seconds

"I'm asking you to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015, legislation that enacts these recommendations. Rhode Island's children deserve a school funding system that works for all of them – and this is our chance to build it."



Optional personal story: Insert 1-2 sentences about your person connection – as a parent, educator, community member, or taxpayer.

5. Frequently Asked Questions

To help advocates feel prepared when speaking with legislators.

What legislation should I be asking my lawmaker to support?	What if my legislator says the state can't afford it?	What if they say the current system is fine?
Ask them to support House Bill 8351 and Senate Bill 3015, legislation that enacts the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations for school funding reform. The full report is available at rifoundation.org/FairFunding .	The Commission's recommendations are designed to be implemented in a phased, fiscally responsible way. Some elements actually reduce long-term costs. Fairer funding also means smarter spending, with stronger accountability requirements attached.	Rhode Island's formula hasn't been updated in 15 years. Eighteen RI leaders, including municipal officials, union leaders, charter school advocates, and parent organizers, all agreed it needs reform. That kind of consensus is rare and meaningful.
How do I find my legislator's contact information?	Can I share this toolkit with others?	Isn't the current system good enough?
Visit vote.sos.ri.gov then click 'find your elected officials'. Enter your address to find your State Representative and Senator, along with their contact information.	Please do! The more Rhode Islanders who contact their legislators, the greater the impact. Share with friends, neighbors, colleagues, parent groups, school staff, and community organizations.	The formula hasn't been meaningfully updated in 15 years. Leaders from across the political spectrum – union leaders, charter school advocates, municipal officials, and parent organizers – all agree it needs reform. That kind of broad consensus is rare and significant.

What You Can Do



Email Your Legislators

Send a message urging your State Representative and Senator to support school funding reform.



Call Their Offices

A two-minute phone call makes a real impact.

Scripts are available in this toolkit above.



Spread the Word

Share this toolkit with neighbors, parent groups, school staff, and community organizations. The more Rhode Islanders who speak up, the greater the impact.

Find Your Legislators:
vote.sos.ri.gov then click 'find your elected officials'

Learn More:
RIFoundation.org/FairFunding