

ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

**TESTIMONY ON 24-S 2983,
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION --
STUDENT SUCCESS ACT
May 1, 2024**

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this bill, which would helpfully amend the law enacted in 2021 designed to allow immigrant students to qualify for resident tuition at the state's public universities, colleges, and community colleges. That legislation was critical to ensure that tuition for higher education was accessible to students who were residents of Rhode Island but did not have formal federal citizenship status. In reducing from three years to one the amount of time such students must have attended a Rhode Island high school, this legislation would further open the doors to immigrant youth in the state to qualify for in-state tuition.

As higher education becomes both a necessity for economic mobility and an increasingly costly financial investment, access to in-state tuition can make a significant difference in the lives of Rhode Island residents going to college. Especially for students who are undocumented, who are children of refugees or other individuals with legal status, or who are in military families whose parents are stationed in Rhode Island, the benefit of having affordable and accessible higher education close to home cannot be overstated.

Affordable access to college is a crucial component of educational equity. As Rhode Island takes steps towards creating a high-achieving public education system, the ability for students in these special situations to make further progress towards their career and academic goals must be also taken into consideration. We therefore support this legislation for further effectuating the goal of the law this body enacted three years ago.

Thank you for considering our views.