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April 28, 2025

President Jack R. Warner
Rhode Island College
600 Mount Pleasant Avenue
Providence, RI 02908

Dear President Warner,

On behalf of the Portuguese American Leadership Council of the United States (PALCUS), I write to express our deep concern and firm opposition to the proposed suspension of the Portuguese concentration within the Modern Languages B.A., as well as the World Languages Education concentration in Portuguese at Rhode Island College (RIC).

Since 2011, RIC has stood as a vital pillar in offering the only Portuguese major in the state's public higher education system—an offering made possible by a single dedicated full-time faculty member. The potential loss of this program is not merely an institutional adjustment; it would be a significant step backward for academic diversity, professional development, and cultural representation in a state that is home to the highest concentration of Portuguese heritage in the United States.

The Portuguese language is the third most spoken in the tri-state area of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut—trailing only Spanish and English. As such, academic access to Portuguese language and Lusophone cultures is essential to preparing the next generation of bilingual and biliterate professionals, particularly in fields such as education, international relations, law, healthcare, and business. The recent launch of Rhode Island's first Portuguese medical interpreting certificate at RIC underscores the program's responsiveness to urgent state workforce needs, especially as healthcare systems seek qualified professionals to serve limited-English-proficient patients.

Moreover, suspending the only undergraduate teacher education program in Portuguese will have serious consequences for the K–12 pipeline, where Portuguese language instruction is thriving, and educators are in short supply. This decision risks dismantling the very infrastructure needed to support this vibrant academic and community ecosystem.

Rhode Island College has long been a gateway for first-generation and heritage students to embrace their cultural identity and expand their career prospects

through higher education. To remove one of the few avenues through which Portuguese-speaking students can see themselves reflected in curriculum and faculty is not only a disservice to them, but to the entire state.

We strongly urge RIC to reconsider this course of action and to preserve the Portuguese major—not only for what it represents to the Portuguese-American community, but for its value to a global, inclusive, and forward-thinking Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Katherine Soares
Chair, PALCUS