



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE

June 18, 2026

TO THE HONORABLE, THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE:

I am pleased to sign into law 2026 – S 2139, “An Act Relating to Education,” which requires affirmative approval by both the Governor and the General Assembly before Rhode Island may participate in the federal school voucher tax credit program.

Major decisions with long-term consequences for our students, schools, and taxpayers deserve thoughtful consideration and agreement among Rhode Island’s elected leaders. This legislation ensures that participation in this program will be made deliberately and collaboratively.

I remain deeply concerned about the program itself. Scholarship-granting organization tax credits are, in practice, voucher programs that redirect public resources toward private institutions that are not required to serve all students and are subject to fewer accountability standards. Students with disabilities are not guaranteed the same federal protections when attending private institutions, and there is little evidence that voucher-style programs improve academic outcomes. For these reasons, I oppose using this program to subsidize private school tuition.

Compounding those concerns, the U.S. Treasury has not yet issued final rules governing the program. Rhode Island should not commit to participation before the program’s parameters, accountability requirements, and permissible uses of funds are fully defined.

Should future federal guidance allow funds to be used exclusively for purposes such as after-school tutoring, transportation, and educational technology—without supporting private school tuition or voucher-equivalent programs—I would be willing to work with the General Assembly to evaluate participation under those limited circumstances.

26 - S 2139
June 18, 2026
Page 2

Rhode Island's public schools educate nearly 90 percent of our students and remain the foundation of our commitment to opportunity for every child. The progress we have made in improving attendance, expanding learning opportunities, and narrowing achievement gaps has been built through sustained investment in public education. This legislation ensures that any future decision regarding this federal program will be made carefully, transparently, and in the best interests of Rhode Island students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel J. McKee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Daniel J. McKee
Governor