

Scouting America™

Narragansett Council

March 24, 2026

Chairperson and Members of the House Education Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for **H7894**, the proposed legislation relating to **Access for Congressionally Chartered National Youth Development Organizations**. This bill represents a meaningful opportunity to expand high-quality, character-building experiences for Rhode Island students while providing schools with a clear, manageable framework for granting access only to vetted and trusted organizations.

As Scout Executive for the Narragansett Council, I have seen firsthand the tremendous positive impact that structured after-school programs can have on young people. Congressionally-chartered youth organizations—such as Girl Scouts of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, and Scouting America—exist specifically to develop leadership, life skills, citizenship, fitness, outdoor education, and community engagement. In Rhode Island, thousands of youths benefit each year from programs that reinforce what schools teach: responsibility, teamwork, service, and perseverance.

Research consistently shows that high-quality after-school youth development programs strengthen students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes, including improved school engagement, reduced behavioral issues, and better academic performance. Additionally, evaluations of evidence-based positive youth development programs including Scouting demonstrate measurable long-term benefits such as increased resilience, stronger decision-making skills, and reductions in risk behaviors among adolescents.

Unfortunately, many schools today feel pressure to either say “yes” to every organization seeking access or “no” to all. For administrators already stretched thin, the simplest solution is often to deny access universally—even to long-standing, reputable organizations with proven educational outcomes. This bill solves that problem. By defining a limited set of congressionally chartered youth organizations eligible for access, the legislation allows schools to confidently say **“yes” to a few trusted partners** without opening the door to every outside group.

The bill protects instructional time, respects parental choice, and ensures that activities are coordinated and nondisruptive. Most importantly, it creates opportunities for Rhode Island students—especially in communities with fewer extracurricular options—to learn leadership, build confidence, and find positive pathways outside the classroom at no cost to our schools or to our State.

I respectfully urge the committee to support this legislation and help strengthen the network of youth development opportunities available to our state's young people. Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to the education and well-being of Rhode Island students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim McCandless". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tim McCandless
Scout Executive & CEO