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Members of the Finance Committee, thank you allowing me to testify regarding House Bill (H) 7137.

If enacted, H 7137 provides in-state tuition to illegal aliens to attend Rhode Island public universities, colleges, or community colleges. Providing in-state tuition for illegal aliens is bad public policy and frustrates the purposes and objectives of federal immigration law.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 prohibits illegal aliens from receiving in-state tuition or financial aid unless all citizens of the United States are also eligible to receive such benefits. In order to provide in-state tuition, Rhode Island would be creating a loophole around that law undermining Congress' intent to prohibit illegal aliens from receiving benefits that other citizens are ineligible to obtain.

Moreover, providing illegal aliens with in-state tuition is patently unfair. When public colleges and universities provide illegal aliens subsidized tuition and financial aid, other deserving students are inevitably denied an opportunity to receive such help. This is particularly true because postsecondary education budgets are extremely limited and, often, unable to meet the needs of all students who depend on financial aid to help fund their education.

In addition, granting in-state tuition to illegal aliens is unfair to foreign students lawfully present in the United States on student visas. Students with visas are required to pay non-resident tuition rates. What kind of message does it send to these students who play by the rules that they must pay higher tuition rates than their compatriots who cheat the system?

Some argue that the main beneficiaries of in-state tuition are innocent people who were brought into this country illegally as children by their parents. Yes, many of the beneficiaries have been dealt a bad hand (by their parents). As difficult (even unfair) as it may be, upon reaching adulthood, they have the responsibility to obey the law. When they knowingly engage in illegal activities, they become culpable in their own right. While they are more sympathetic than the people who committed the predicate offense, their situation does not excuse their continued illegal presence. Granting in-state tuition to illegal aliens accommodates and rewards those who violate our immigration laws and encourages others to follow the same path. It gives prospective

immigrants little incentive to pursue legal paths to immigration when they can side step the process and gain the same benefits.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify today in opposition to H 7137.