

The RI Coalition of Library Advocates supports House Bill H-5664, Media Literacy, and strongly urges that schools fulfill the spirit of the bill by relying on an important resource: their school library media programs as required in RI BEP Chapter 13, G-13-1.3.11.

Media Literacy is an essential skill for all citizens, and the School Library Media Program is the best place to teach it. That's why RI's Basic Education Program (BEP Chapter 13, G-13-1.3.11) requires all schools to provide effective high-quality school library media programs, with equitable access to school library media resources and information literacy instruction.

Effective school library media programs meet research-based standards. They are staffed by certified school library media specialists—teachers who empower students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information. They ensure that all students have equitable access to resources and receive instruction in information literacy with opportunities:

1. to read widely for lifelong learning;
2. to access, evaluate, use, and share new knowledge using a variety of information resources (print, visual, media, and digital);
3. to problem-solve using diverse sources, contexts, disciplines, and cultural perspectives; and
4. to use information ethically by respecting others' ideas and acknowledging their contributions. (RI BEP G-13-1.3.11).

In short, national standards for school library media programs match the requirements set forth in House Bill H-5664, Media Literacy, and should be incorporated into BEP G-13-1.3.11 for all students to be able to “to access, analyze, evaluate, create and communicate using a variety of forms, including, but not limited to, print, visual, audio, interactive, and digital texts.”

We also note that under terms of ESSA, federal funding should be available to help schools strengthen their library media centers for this task. The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is currently developing a plan to implement the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA) as required by the U.S. Department of Education. RIDE will determine how ESSA federal resources will be allocated. If House Bill H-5664 passes, RIDE could incorporate Digital Media Information Literacy into its plan for funding in ESSA under Title IV A. ESSA Title IV Part A may provide the stimulus for innovative grants to create new opportunities to increase student achievement in digital media information literacy and thus, there will be no additional expenses incurred to incorporate media literacy with digital information literacy into School Library Media Programs as taught by certified school library media specialists in every school.

Sincerely yours,

Cheryl A. McCarthy, Vice Chair/Chair Elect

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