

Amicus brief submitted by Providence Youth Student Movement, Providence Student Union, Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians For Education, Youth in Action Rhode Island, and Rhode Island Urban Debate League

*The stories of Rhode Island youth bear witness to the inadequacy of civics education in Rhode Island schools.*

This brief presents the voices of youth members of five Rhode Island non-profit organizations who are affected by the inadequacy of civics education in Rhode Island public schools. These young adults -- many of whom come from disadvantaged communities, are first generation Americans, or identify as members of disenfranchised racial and ethnic groups -- collectively yearn to become productive, informed citizens in their country and communities. To accomplish this, they recognize their need for adequate civics preparation that Rhode Island schools fail to deliver. Youth convey how they did not learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. They describe how they lacked vocabulary and knowledge of such basics as what are the three branches of government, how to vote and fill out a ballot, and why voting is important. In addition, these young people tell how they missed out on learning essential skills such as self-expression and self-advocacy, which are needed to participate meaningfully in democratic society. As a result, the *Amici* organizations have had to step in to provide these youth the civic knowledge, skills and activities that missing from Rhode Island schools, but they have the resources to provide these opportunities to only a fraction of the young Rhode Islanders who need this knowledge and these experiences; they believe their role should be one of supplementing, rather than providing these youth the basic civic knowledge, skills and experiences they require. The country, and the Rhode Island community, would greatly benefit from this Court's recognition of the Constitutional guarantee of civics education