

House Education Committee

From: Stevent Cleto Garcia

Re: Testimony in support of House Bill 7614 (Youth Voting Power on the Council for Elementary and Secondary Education)

Dear Chairman McNamara and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am thrilled to express my enthusiastic support for Bill HB-7614, a transformative legislative initiative that champions the inclusion of youth in shaping the educational landscape of Rhode Island. This bill, introduced by Representatives Morales, Caldwell, McEntee, Kislak, Giraldo, Voas, Casimiro, McNamara, Biah, and Cotter, demonstrates a progressive commitment to amplifying the voices of our youth in the decision-making processes concerning their education.

The proposed amendments to Section 16-60-2 of the General Laws are particularly noteworthy, as they pave the way for a more inclusive Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. By appointing student representatives from each public secondary school to the newly established Student Advisory Council, the bill actively involves the youth in crucial discussions about their educational experiences. This innovative step not only recognizes the importance of student perspectives but also empowers them to play an integral role in shaping policies that directly impact their lives.

I applaud the provision that grants equal voting powers to the chairperson of the Student Advisory Council, irrespective of their student status. This key feature ensures that the youth have a genuine influence in the decision-making process, emphasizing the belief that their insights are valuable and deserving of equal consideration. Such empowerment is crucial for fostering a sense of ownership and engagement among the younger generation, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and effective educational system.

By establishing a framework for regular meetings and the adoption of bylaws by the Student Advisory Council, the bill further solidifies the commitment to meaningful youth participation. This not only provides a structured platform for the exchange of ideas but also ensures that the youth's opinions are taken into account when crafting educational policies.

House Bill 7614 stands as a beacon of progress in recognizing the importance of youth voices in education. I encourage all stakeholders, legislators and community members, to rally behind this bill and support its enactment. By doing so, we can collectively contribute to creating an educational system that truly reflects the needs, aspirations, and perspectives of our youth.

Sincerely,

Stevent Cleto Garcia