

Lisa Cataldi

From: Daisy Vega <daisycvega@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 13, 2024 10:48 AM
To: House Education Committee
Subject: H 7726

Dear Chairperson McNamara and the House Committee on Education,

I am writing to you today to encourage you to support H 7726, which will establish a process public school districts must follow before closing a school. I am deeply concerned about the closures of Fortes Elementary, ASF Broad Street Elementary, Carl G. Lauro Elementary, Gilbert Stuart Middle School, and 360 High School. These closures occurred with absolutely no community input. Repeatedly, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has shown disdain for students, families, and educators. This legislation is necessary to finally hold RIDE accountable.

This legislation is crucial to ensuring that school districts are accountable to the families and students they serve. It requires the need for transparent, common-sense information that people in the community deserve to know before a decision like this is made. The Providence Public School Department (PPSD) and RIDE decided to close the schools mentioned above without consulting the school communities that will be disrupted by these closures. This lack of community engagement is inexcusable; it is also part of a pattern of poor leadership that excludes community input. We need a mechanism that ensures all students and families are fully engaged in any process that involves such a drastic change in their lives.

Providence students, families, and educators have been bravely fighting to keep their schools open. I write to you today in solidarity with these community members. I've been a school counselor at 360 High School for the past seven years. Our school community makes our students feel safe and their parents feel at ease when their students are in our care. Our students and families are devastated by the closure of 360 High School and many are deciding to leave rather than attend the new 'merged' school at the campus.

The General Assembly has plenary power over education in this state. I ask that you use this power to help prevent not only the inexcusable closure of 360 High School but also future closures like this from happening. Families who have experienced the pain of secret, sudden school closures deserve meaningful action now.

I hope that you will join me in standing in solidarity with the members of the Providence Schools community, who have seen their schools taken from them without their input. I want to emphasize that this legislation is not asking for excessive or radical amounts of information; it simply requires the very basics of community engagement and community input. Community engagement and input are nowhere near where they need to be in Providence.

Thank you for taking the time to review my concerns. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.
Sincerely,

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