

**Lisa Cataldi**

---

**From:** Ellen Foley <ellenfoley@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 12, 2024 9:58 PM  
**To:** House Education Committee  
**Subject:** Support of H7726

Dear Chairperson McNamara and the House Committee on Education,

I am a Providence resident, Providence public school parent and a proud teacher at 360 High School. I am writing to you today to urge you to support H7726, to establish a process public school districts must follow before closing a school.

My colleagues and I are in the fight of our lives to overturn the 360 High School closure decision. We are fighting because we know 360 is a special place that could serve as a model for other high schools in the district and state.

But, even if 360 were not so extraordinary, this closure decision would deserve to be reconsidered. PPSD's Turnaround Action Plan says "transparency is fundamental" and "families will have a voice in their child's education" but..

- The decision to close 360 High School was made hastily by a small group of people without input from the students and families affected most by the decision.
- When asked about what alternatives were considered, district leadership refused to "list out everything discussed"
- The Superintendent and Commissioner have both been absent at the public meetings where they might have heard the community's reaction and both have declined or simply not responded to invitations to meet with faculty and staff
- District leaders conflate "community engagement" with meetings with stakeholders to hand down their decisions

It is wrong that a small group of individuals have such unfettered control of our public education system that they can make decisions without any public input and without any accountability. It is wrong that the Superintendent and Commissioner can simply avoid the public when they make controversial decisions. And it is just sad that the people who you have entrusted to improve the education system in this state have such a fundamental misunderstanding of what it takes to serve the community. Rhode Island Department of Education leaders pay lip service to community engagement, but in reality, they flout the commitments they made to students, to the community, and to you, the legislature.

The General Assembly has plenary power over education in this state. I ask that you use this power to help prevent not the monumentally bad decision to close 360 High School, but also future closures. Families and faculties who have experienced the pain of secret, sudden school closures deserve meaningful action now. Please support H7726 and please contact the Governor and Commissioner to rescind the 360 closure decision.

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

Sincerely,  
Ellen Foley  
401-225-6844