

Date: March 13, 2024

RI State House, 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill H7726

To: House Committee Chair McNamara

Good afternoon, Dear Chairman McNamara and Members of the House Committee on Education, my name is Isabel Quero-Hernandez, I am an Urban Education Policy masters student at Brown University and an ETS Counselor at Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School.

I'm here today to express my support for H7726, an important bill focused on shaping the future of our education system in Providence.

At its core, H7726 serves as a guide for transparency, community engagement, and accountability in the process of public school closures, mergers, and phase-outs. It is a testament of our commitment to ensuring that every voice is heard and that every concern is addressed when decisions are being made that profoundly impact students, families, and communities.

This bill mandates essential steps to ensure stakeholders are well informed about school closures. Information that must be shared through various communication channels and in multiple languages, to ensure accessibility to all members of our diverse community.

The most pivotal aspect of H7726 lies in its emphasis on community engagement. The emphasis on meetings and public forums where all invested communities can actively participate, voice their concerns, and provide invaluable perspectives and feedback is an inclusive approach that empowers our communities, fosters trust, and provides accountability in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, H7726 prioritizes the well-being of our students and families affected by school closures, mergers, or phase-outs. The development of contingency plans, addressing enrollment options, transportation, and services, demonstrates our commitment to ensuring a smooth transition and minimizes disruptions to education.

It's crucial to acknowledge the historical context and the disproportionate impact of past school closures on communities of color. H7726 recognizes this history and underscores the need for sensitivity and awareness in decision-making processes, ensuring that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past.

In conclusion, I urge each one of you to support H7726. Please stand together in upholding principles of transparency, community engagement, and accountability in decisions regarding public school closures, mergers, or phase-outs. By enacting this legislation, we can pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive education system that serves the best interests of all students and communities in Providence.

Thank you.