

March 13, 2024

Dear Chairperson McNamara and the House Committee on Education,

I am writing to you today to **encourage you to support bill H 7726, which will establish a process that the public school district must follow before closing a school.** I am very concerned about the closure of 360 High School.

I am a support staff at 360 High School, I have witnessed first hand the emotional suffering of 360 High School students and their families when they first learned exactly five weeks ago (2/7/24) that their beloved school is scheduled to be closed at the end of this school year. The school district never contacted the students or their families before making the decision that will forever affect their lives. I continue to witness day in and day out how the decision to close our community school has hurt our students and their families because they are facing losing a school that has been an **ANCHOR** for them. Every day that passes by, the emotional pain and hurt grows bigger, despite being in a school district that has embraced Social Emotional Learning (S.E.L). Our students at 360 High School have always felt the security, warmth, safety, and a sense of belonging. They have always felt appreciated, competent and they know that they can always count on the supportive academic and emotional environment that our school offers them. Our students have known all along that they can raise their voices at 360 High School and they will be heard. Unfortunately, that has not been the case outside of the school.

Our students have been raising their voices in public, to express their opposition to the unilateral decision to close their school; but they have encountered a very different situation; they have felt unheard, disregarded and the police have been called on them and their families. What a reality lesson they are learning from the school system. What a reality lesson they are learning from our state whose motto is HOPE. I am calling on you today to restore that HOPE for our Providence students and especially to the 360 High School students. Our students and their families are members of our community, our city, our state. Our Providence students and their families especially the 360 High School students deserve to have HOPE that you can stop the closing of our school.

I strongly encourage you to listen to 360 High School students, listen to their families. Read the score card from the Rhode Island Department Education, the Surveyworks results for 360 High School. Learn about our school statistics and the data will tell you that 360 High School is a school on the right track of performance. Our students need the small community school setting to get a stronger education foundation.

You can make the difference in the students' lives by starting the healing process and **restore HOPE by having the decision to close 360 High School revoked.**

Luz Ospina