

Susan Rohwer
Regarding House Education Committee Support of Bill H7726

March 13, 2024

Dear House Education Committee,

My name is Susan Rohwer. I am a Providence resident, the parent of an 11-year-old in Providence Public Schools, and a long-time advocate for families and students in the school district.

I am submitting testimony because we must codify transparency and community involvement in decisions affecting public school closures. I urge you to support bill H7726 because families and students are the most impacted by decisions made by the Rhode Island Department of Education. They deserve to have a voice in school closure processes and have their concerns considered.

Unfortunately, school closures are the collateral damage of generations of policy choices, resulting in the neglect and under-resourcing of Providence Public Schools. They also disproportionately affect communities of color and lead to disruptions in education, loss of cultural identity, and economic hardship. With this in mind, the least policymakers and school administrators can do is create transparent communication systems and do thorough planning to mitigate the disruption caused by school closures, mergers, or phase-outs.

Additionally, we need to codify school closure decisions to honor the historical trauma these decisions reawaken and the existing inequalities they exacerbate. A bill like this could be a small step towards rebuilding the trust of families and students lost after years of being ignored.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I hope you will consider it as you decide whether to support bill H7726.

Sincerely,
Susan Rohwer
92 Dover Street
Providence, RI 02908

As a parent with a child in Providence Public schools, and a long-time advocate for accountability within the district and amid the state takeover I urge you to support bill H7726.

I have witnessed the numerous instances

Stress the need for accountability in decision-making regarding public education facilities and the importance of adhering to standards and procedures outlined in the legislation.

Highlight how past school closures disproportionately affected communities of color, leading to disruptions in education, loss of cultural identity, and economic hardship.