



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ^{AFT}_{AFL-CIO}

To: House Education Committee
From: James Parisi, Field Representative
Date: April 8, 2025
Re: **Charter School Union Neutrality**

Testimony in **Support** of 2025-H 5840 (Representative Casey, et. al.)

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals supports H 5840 and appreciates Rep. Casey's introduction of this legislation. The bill would require charter school administrators to be neutral and not take sides in any effort to unionize charter school staff. The bill includes this provision in the general charter school approval statute (§16-77-3.1) as well as the approval statutes for district charter schools §16-77.2-2 and independent charter schools §16-77.3-2.

Union neutrality would be included in the application of a new school or the renewal application of an existing charter school. One suggestion we offer the sponsor, and the Committee, is that the same provision for district charter schools and independent charter schools should also be repeated in the mayoral academy charter school statute (§16-77.4)

The RIFTHP supports the unionization of all workers and has a specific interest in teachers and school employees. Enhanced workplace rights and a voice in the workplace are the benefits of unionization.

This school year, RIFTHP organized two separate bargaining units (Upper House and Lower House) at the Paul Cuffee Charter School. The parties are currently engaged in contract negotiations for the first contract. Staff at the Highlander charter school organized with another union this year as well.

The RIFTHP believes it would be a misuse of public funds to hire consultants or use administrative time to discourage charter schoolteachers and staff from forming unions. Employers should remain neutral should workers consider unionization. It is up to the workers, free from employer coercion, to make the decision to unionize or not.

The RIFTHP urges passage of H 5840.

356 SMITH STREET PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02908-3761 (401) 273-9800 FAX (401) 331-8815

• **Maribeth Calabro**, President • **Bonnie Horta**, Executive Assistant • **Maria Manzi**, Administrative Assistant •
• **Michael J. Mullane**, Field Representative • **James A. Parisi**, Field Representative •
• **Christopher Lambert**, Field Representative • **Jeremy Sencer**, Field Representative •