



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT
AFL - CIO

To: House Education Committee
From: Maribeth Calabro, President
Date: April 10, 2025
Re: **Testimony in Support of H 6034**
Charter School Network Moratorium

Honorable Members of the House Education Committee,

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP) strongly supports H 6034, Relating to Education-Establishment of Charter Public Schools, to ensure that no new applications for charter schools shall be granted after the effective date if the proposed school is a "network" charter school, nor shall applications for existing charter schools be approved if the proposed expansion would result in the creation of a network charter. This legislative change is vital to addressing the growing economic and educational challenges faced by our public-school districts, particularly those in urban and urban-ring communities.

One of the most pressing concerns in the expansion of large, network-style charter schools is the economic impact on our public-school systems, especially the loss of critical public funding that is siphoned away from Rhode Island's schools, particularly in the urban core to support charter school networks operating outside of our state. As these charter networks grow, they often rely on large-scale, national, or multi-state organizations that divert substantial public monies to management companies and operations in other states.

The work of political scientist Domingo Morel, particularly in his book "Takeover: Race, Education, and American Democracy", underscores how the expansion of charter networks—especially those with national or multi-state operations—can have unintended consequences on local communities. The Louisiana experience, post-Katrina, serves as a powerful example of how the shift to large network-style charters resulted in substantial outflows of public funds, as resources that could have been reinvested into New Orleans' public schools were funneled into charter management companies with ties to other states. Morel documents how the promise of better education for all students often fell short, particularly for students who remained in the public school system, as funding continued to be sent toward charter networks, management fees and administrative costs rather than strengthening our investment in our local schools which will have greater impact on the students, families and the community.

In Rhode Island, we are at risk of facing similar challenges. As large charter school networks expand, a sizable portion of our public education funding is directed to these out-of-state organizations rather than being invested into Rhode Island's struggling public school systems. This shift not only undermines the viability of our public schools, but it exacerbates inequities in already underfunded urban and urban-ring districts. When public dollars leave our state to support these large networks, our local schools face increased financial stress, further limiting their ability to serve students effectively.

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Please be reminded that public schools in Rhode Island provide services to all students, regardless of need. Charter schools, by contrast, often have selective admission processes, including lotteries, and the increased enrollment in network-style charters diverts resources away from the diverse student populations in our public schools who require comprehensive support and services. The growing financial disparity between the two systems—public schools and large charter networks—continues to widen, placing even more pressure on already strained public education budgets.

If we are serious about providing equitable opportunities for all Rhode Island students, it is crucial that we invest in strengthening our public schools and keeping our public education dollars working within our own communities.

I urge you to adopt this bill, and in doing so, ensure that our public funds stay where they can be most impactful, within our state, supporting the children and communities of Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue.