

April 22, 2025

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara, Chair
House Education Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence RI, 2023

Dear Chair McNamara, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I support House Bill 5335, *An Act Relating to Education, The Paul W. Crowley Rhode Island Student Investment Initiative* to end Rhode Island's takeover of Providence Public Schools (PPSD) and return the District to the City of Providence's management on July 1, 2025.

My reasoning for supporting local control, is because there is no definitive evidence that state control has improved proficiency levels or test scores with students in grades 4 – 12! It's time to hand back control to the folks who know the population of students they are trying to educate. In these trying times, it is important to put collaboration and partnership over Authoritarian rule.

Providence is ready to resume management of Providence Public Schools. The district has made improvements under the state takeover, and the only way to sustain and expand those improvements is through a return to local control. The city has demonstrated its commitment to a responsible transition since Mayor Smiley took office. The city has spent the past two years laying the groundwork for this transition by engaging with residents including families, students, and educators. The *Community Voices on Providence Public Schools* report shows that 90% of the community members expressed support for returning schools to local control immediately or in the next few months.

The City's *Providence's Plan for Our Schools: Building a Brighter Future* details the steps for a responsible transition back to local control for community engagement, learning, procurement, funding, facilities, and data management processes.

With the City's commitment to substantially leveling up funding for PPSD over the coming years, the district will have the necessary resources to continue progress on the Turnaround Action Plan.

I urge the committee to pass H5335 to return the management of Providence Public Schools to Providence. It's what's best for our state leadership, municipal leadership in Providence, but most importantly, the students of PPSD and their families!

Sincerely,

Adewole T. Akinbi

Co-Founder/President, Smith Hill Partners' Initiative (SHPI)