

May 10, 2025

Dear General Assembly Members,

I strongly urge you to reconsider the Pilot Program for Virtual Reality Learning Platform RI H6107. As a school based speech language pathologist for over 25 years in RI, I am deeply concerned regarding the harms of unvetted technology pushed by the tech industry into the education sector. There is a growing body of research that demonstrates the negative impact educational technology is having on children in regards to their learning and mental health.

Experimental learning platforms that use virtual reality and are not even identified in this Bill have no place in the hands of children. A recent lawsuit against Meta's virtual reality program "Horizon" exposes the harms that these new technologies pose to children. Fairplay, a leading nonprofit organization to protect children from the harms of screens filed a request on April 10th, 2025 for the Federal Trade Commission to investigate Meta for violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) by knowingly letting children under age 13 improperly access its "Horizon Worlds" gaming platform and collecting their personal data without parental notice and consent, exposing the kids to harm. Fairplay conducted an investigation that revealed children's exposure to extremely harmful content, despite Meta's claims that this product was safe. Essentially, any program that is not vetted and fully researched by unbiased sources should have no place in the schools in RI.

As an educator and parent, I am concerned about children's health and well-being as it pertains to the use of school-issued technology products and tools. The tech industry has been successful at pushing a narrative that their products are educationally beneficial without solid evidence to support these claims. As a result, student performance and mental health suffers while the tech industry profits off of children.

Please do not allow children in the state of RI to be used by technology companies pushing unvetted products into the classroom.

Sincerely,
Denise Champney MS CCC/SLP