

Testimony in support of House Bill 7415

Dear Chair and members of the House Education Committee,

I am Alicia Pratt, and I am writing this in support of House Bill 7415, The Charter School Moratorium and Cap Reduction. This bill imposes a moratorium on the approval and expansion of charter public schools. It prohibits the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education from authorizing new or expanding charter schools set to begin operations in the 2026–2027 school year. It also bars the state from approving or funding any new charter school not approved before July 1, 2025, and reduces the statewide cap on charter schools from 35 to 25.

I support the charter school moratorium and cap reduction because I believe that all students deserve the opportunity to learn in true neighborhood and community schools. Charter schools operate by fearmongering to parents that their schools will not serve their children, and that charters are the answer. Our public school system is not perfect, I will grant them that, but reinventing the wheel helps no one. Instead of utilizing their ample resources to help public schools function better, charter schools hurt students who attend public schools by siphoning funds— to the tune of millions of dollars—from local public school districts. They also fail to serve as many high-need students as their host districts, creating separate and unequal conditions for success. In Rhode Island, charters have been outperformed by public school districts in SAT/ACT scores, and have historically served smaller special needs populations than their public school counterparts, underscoring the risk of expanding a system that does not strive to serve all student populations.

I believe a charter school moratorium is necessary to stop divestment from public school districts. We need to focus on supporting the great work that is already happening in our public schools and providing material support so that our students, teachers, and administrators can leverage funding to expand and amplify opportunities for success for all Rhode Island students instead of creating a parallel system that fractures funding for our students and takes money out of the state.

In a hearing for House Bill 6034 in 2025, which would've effectively created a charter school moratorium in Rhode Island, Woonsocket Teacher's Guild President, Robert Stewart, shared that Woonsocket's city council and school committee oppose network charter expansion, warning that it creates a parallel school district structure that duplicates administrative functions and shifts resources away from students.

The current cap is also essentially meaningless, as networks count as one charter under the cap allowing networks like Achievement First with 7 schools to be considered a single charter. In addition to this, teachers in mayoral charters are not unionized, do not have tenure protections, and cannot contribute to the pension fund. We cannot stand idly by as charters continue to fracture our school districts, diminish our educator's capacity to organize and secure a financially stable future, and also fail to provide equitable access to education.

In closing, I urge the House Education Committee to pass House Bill 7415.

Thank you,
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