

Lisa Cataldi

From: Anne Grimes <annegrimes56@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 11:21 AM
To: House Education Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of H7415 – Charter School Cap

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Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Anne Grimes, Vice President of Middle Schools for Providence Public Schools and a Providence Public School Computer Science Teacher, and I am writing in strong support of H7415 to extend the moratorium on new charter schools for three years and to lower the statewide charter cap from 35 to 25. This bill is a necessary step to stabilize district budgets and protect the quality of education in our traditional public schools.[[publiccharters](#)]

Under Rhode Island's funding formula, money follows the student, so when a student leaves a district for a charter school, the associated per-pupil funding leaves the district as well. In FY2025, charter schools are projected to receive approximately 176.7 million dollars in state formula aid, and local districts also pay tens of millions in charter tuition on top of this amount. In FY2026, charter formula aid is projected to grow further to about 201 million dollars, an 8.7% increase driven largely by charter enrollment growth. These are dollars that districts can no longer use to reduce class sizes, upgrade buildings, expand CTE and AP offerings, or provide robust supports in neighborhood schools.

In Providence alone, about 17.8% of resident students now attend charter schools, meaning a substantial share of district operating dollars is diverted out of the system each year while many fixed costs remain. A temporary cap and moratorium will slow this fiscal drain and give the General Assembly, RIDE, and districts time to align funding and facilities planning with student needs.

It is also important to note that public schools are already making real progress. RIDE recently reported a statewide four-year graduation rate of 84.1% for the Class of 2024, maintaining a ten-year high, with Providence improving to 79.4%, up 2.6 percentage points in a single year and more than five percentage points since 2018–19. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT data show that many individual charter high schools have graduation rates that are similar to or only modestly higher than the state average, while others fall below it, indicating mixed performance overall rather than uniformly superior outcomes. This suggests that we can and should invest in strengthening existing district schools, where the vast majority of students are educated and where recent gains are already visible.

The demographic data also show that traditional districts educate a broader and more complex range of learners. From FY2018–FY2021, only about 0.5% of students reimbursed through the state's High-Cost Special Education fund were enrolled in charter schools, even though charters educated roughly 6.9% of the statewide public school population during that period. This means that districts are serving the overwhelming majority of students with the most intensive and expensive needs while simultaneously losing tuition dollars to charter schools. State data also show that, while charter schools enroll high percentages of low-income students statewide, Providence District schools serve higher concentrations of English Language Learners and students with disabilities than Providence-only charters.[[publiccharters](#)]

Because funding follows the student but many costs do not, each new charter seat effectively removes resources from the very schools that are responsible for educating the state's highest-need students, including English Language Learners, students with IEPs, and students requiring high-cost special education services. Our traditional public schools in Providence and across Rhode Island are already

demonstrating that, when adequately resourced, they can educate all children well, including our most vulnerable populations.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support H7415, maintain the moratorium on new charter schools for the next three years, and lower the charter cap from 35 to 25 to protect and strengthen our public school system.[\[publiccharters\]](#)

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Sincerely,
Anne Grimes
Vice President of Middle Schools, Providence Public Schools
Providence Public School Computer Science Teacher**