

Dear Members of the Rhode Island House Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 2787, which proposes a three-year pause on the approval of new charter schools in Rhode Island.

As a public school educator, I see firsthand the strain that the continued expansion of charter schools places on our traditional public school system. The financial impact alone is significant. Funding follows students to charter schools, which leaves district schools with shrinking budgets while still maintaining the responsibility of serving the majority of students. In Providence, approximately 25% of students now attend charter schools. Our district cannot sustain strong neighborhood schools while simultaneously expanding charter options.

The opening and expansion of charter schools also creates instability within public school classrooms. We frequently experience a revolving door of students who leave for charter schools and then return mid-year. This movement disrupts classroom continuity, affects student learning, and creates instability both for the students themselves and for the classrooms they enter.

Additionally, Providence has recently invested millions of dollars into new and improved school buildings. Before expanding charter schools further, we should focus on fully utilizing and strengthening the public school infrastructure we have already committed significant resources to building.

Traditional public schools serve every student who walks through our doors. We educate students with diverse needs, including those requiring specialized services and support. Charter schools, however, tend to draw from the existing public school population while serving far fewer students with significant special needs. This imbalance places additional responsibility and cost on traditional public schools.

For these reasons, a temporary pause on new charter school approvals is a responsible step. Senate Bill 2787 would allow Rhode Island time to evaluate the long-term impact of charter expansion, stabilize district budgets, and ensure that our neighborhood public schools remain strong and sustainable.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Rhode Island's students and educators.

Sincerely,

Carrie L. Allen