

Lisa Cataldi

From: Gary Vaspol <vaspolg@psdri.net>
Sent: Monday, March 9, 2026 12:07 PM
To: House Education Committee
Subject: H7415 Charter Moratorium

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Dear Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly,

My name is Gary Vaspol. I am an educator in the Pawtucket School District, and an adjunct professor at Salve Regina University. I am writing to express my concern about the growing financial strain that charter school expansion is placing on traditional public school districts across Rhode Island, particularly in Pawtucket. This year alone, Pawtucket sent approximately \$7.5 million in “tuition to other publics”—largely to charter schools—while the district now faces an \$8 million budget deficit, the worst in a generation of educators. The consequences are severe and immediate: potential teacher layoffs, school closures, and reduced services for the students who remain in Pawtucket’s public schools.

Pawtucket is not alone. Other districts across Rhode Island are facing serious concerns about the financial impact of charter expansion on district budgets. The intention behind the idea of charter schools may seem noble, however, the effects on public school students are devastating and need to be addressed.

Rhode Island already consists of more than 40 school districts and local education agencies, each with its own administrative structure, transportation systems, and overhead costs. Expanding parallel systems of charter schools increases duplication and inefficiency at a time when districts are struggling to maintain core services. Rather than strengthening public education, this fragmentation strains resources that should be directed toward classrooms.

Transportation is one clear example. Districts are legally required to provide busing for charter school students, even as many communities are forced to reduce or eliminate bus routes for students attending their neighborhood public schools. This places additional logistical and financial pressure on local districts while providing fewer services to the majority of students who remain in public schools.

It is also important to note that charter schools do not consistently outperform the public schools from which they draw students. Yet districts must still absorb the financial impact of tuition payments and lost enrollment while maintaining buildings, staff, and services for the students who remain.

Finally, the state has spent the last decade investing in a once-in-a-generation school rebuilding initiative to modernize and improve public school facilities. It raises a serious question: why would Rhode Island invest billions in rebuilding public schools only to shift increasing public funding to charter organizations, some operated by corporations that send money out of state? These investments were meant to strengthen the public system that serves the vast majority of Rhode Island’s children.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the General Assembly to consider a temporary moratorium on the expansion of charter schools while the state evaluates the financial and structural impacts on local districts. Such a pause would allow policymakers to examine funding formulas, district sustainability, transportation costs, and the long-term consequences for public education in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island's public schools serve the overwhelming majority of our students. Ensuring their stability and success must remain our highest priority.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and for your continued commitment to the students and communities of Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gary Vaspol

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