

Dear Chair McNamara and Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is **Grizzel I. Clemetson**. I am writing to submit my testimony regarding **H7415, HJR 8131, and H7615**. Although I originally intended to provide this testimony in person, I am now submitting these remarks via email for the committee's consideration.

I am a **product of Providence Public Schools**, and for the past **seven years I have worked as a substitute teacher in the Providence School Department**.

So, I am not just speaking as someone who cares about public education, I am speaking as someone who **went through these schools and still works in them today**.

Every day I see the students who rely on our public schools: students with disabilities, multilingual learners, students who arrive mid-year, and students who need the most support.

Our public schools **don't get to choose who they serve. They serve everyone**.

However, Providence is currently sending **more than \$36 million each year in tuition payments to charter schools**, while district schools remain responsible for maintaining buildings, transportation, and specialized services for the majority of students.

At the same time, traditional public schools serve **higher percentages of students with disabilities and multilingual learners than many charter schools operating in the same communities**.

A few numbers illustrate the imbalance:

- **Providence Public Schools serve about 19% students with disabilities**, compared to much lower percentages in several charter schools.
- **Providence serves around 40% multilingual learners**, significantly higher than many charter schools in Rhode Island.
- Meanwhile, Providence continues to send **over \$36 million annually in charter tuition payments** out of the district budget.

This means our public schools are **carrying the greatest responsibility while losing resources at the same time**.

That is why the legislation before you matters.

- **H7415** would place a temporary pause on charter expansion so Rhode Island can examine the fiscal and educational impact on public school districts.
- **HJR 8131** would create a study commission to bring transparency and accountability to how charter school funding affects our public education system.
- **H7615**, which would allow all-charter school districts, moves Rhode Island further away from democratic oversight and accountability.

I am not writing today because I read a report.

I am writing because **I lived it** and because I still walk into Providence classrooms today.

What many of us are asking for is reasonable: **pause, study the impact, and make decisions based on the full picture.**

Because when resources leave public schools, it is **the students in our neighborhoods who feel it first.**

As someone who **grew up in Providence Public Schools and still works in them today**, I respectfully urge the committee to **support H7415 and HJR 8131 and reject H7615.**

Thank you for your time and for the work you do on behalf of Rhode Island's students.

Respectfully,

Grizzel I. Clemetson

(401) 699-6919

Providence, RI