

Keith C. Catone, Ed.D., Ward 1 Representative, Cranston School Committee  
61 Windsor Road  
Cranston, RI 02905

Rhode Island House of Representatives  
House Committee on Education  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

March 10, 2026

Dear honorable members of the House Committee on Education:

I am writing in my capacity as the elected representative from Ward 1 on the Cranston School Committee in **support of H7415**, which would press the pause button on new charter schools and charter school expansion for the upcoming three school years.

Like many traditional public school districts across the state, Cranston Public Schools are facing fiscal uncertainty. While not fully due to the advent of charter schools, the loss of local and state education funding from traditional districts to charter schools has reached a tipping point. Our adopted school budget for the 2026-27 school year includes over \$4 million in charter school tuition. Ironically, the amount of additional appropriation we have requested from the City of Cranston also stands at just over \$4 million. These numbers are not coincidental. **The systemic diversion of local and state education funding away from traditional school districts to support the operation of charter schools has reached a harmful level.** Even just a few handfuls of students from Cranston attending new charter schools would have a significantly negative financial impact for our district schools, jeopardizing our ability to provide the high quality educational experiences the vast majority of Cranston residents have grown to expect and receive from our schools.

**A three-year pause on new and expanded charter schools will provide the necessary time to evaluate and mitigate any fiscal damage the charter school system has caused for traditional school districts. It will also enable us, as a state, to understand the educational impact that the charter school system is having on traditional public schools.** That is, what kinds of educational impacts there are when traditional districts are faced with untenable financial choices that can result in a range of actions from school closure or consolidation to teacher layoffs and larger class sizes to structural deficits due to unalterable and uncontrollable operational costs.

As someone who has dedicated over 25 years to supporting public education, a Cranston Public Schools parent, and a Cranston School Committee representative, **I urge you to support and pass H7415 so that the state of Rhode Island can review its charter school policies, mitigate unintended harm to traditional public schools, and support investment in the traditional public schools that our communities deserve.**

Respectfully,



Keith Catone, Ed.D.