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From: Mildred Marzan-Gallop <mildred.marzangallop@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 9:56 AM
To: House Education Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of H7415 and HJR8131 and in Opposition to H7615

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Dear Members of the Rhode Island House Education Committee,

My name is Mildred Marzan and I am an educator in Rhode Island. I am writing to **urge you to support H7415, the Charter School Moratorium and Cap Reduction, and HJR8131, the Charter School Funding Study Commission**, and to **reject H7615, which would create all-charter school districts**.

As a teacher, I see every day how public schools serve **all students**, including those with the greatest needs. Public schools welcome students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students who require specialized services. However, the data shows that charter schools in Rhode Island do not serve these students at comparable rates.

For example, many charter schools enroll significantly fewer students with IEPs than surrounding districts. In districts like Providence, Rhode Island and Pawtucket, Rhode Island, between **16% and 19% of students have IEPs**, yet some charter schools enroll **as few as 5–10%**.

This raises an important question: **If charters are public schools, why are they not serving the same population of high-need students?**

Charter expansion also creates serious financial strain for traditional public school districts. For example, Providence Public School District currently budgets **over \$36 million each year in charter tuition payments**. These funds leave district schools even as districts continue to serve the majority of high-need students.

The current charter cap is also ineffective. Charter networks count as only **one charter school under the cap**, even if they operate multiple schools. For example, the network Achievement First operates seven schools in Rhode Island but counts as only a single charter. This loophole allows unlimited expansion of large charter networks, many of which are run from outside the state.

Additionally, many charter networks create poor working conditions for educators. Teachers at mayoral academies are often **not unionized, lack tenure protections, and cannot contribute to the state pension system**. In some cases, teachers are also less experienced. Across Achievement First's seven Rhode Island schools, **66% of teachers have fewer than three years of experience**, and **41% are teaching on emergency certification**. At the same time, large amounts of public funding are sent out of state to parent organizations. In 2024, the CEO of Achievement First earned **\$476,432**, despite having no background in education.

These concerns highlight why Rhode Island urgently needs **H7415**, which would pause charter expansion and reduce the cap until we can ensure fairness, transparency, and equity for all students.

Supporting **HJR8131**, the Charter School Funding Study Commission, is also essential. Rhode Island currently operates **two parallel public education systems**, yet we lack clear data on the long-term fiscal and equity impacts. With declining enrollment and uncertain federal funding, it is irresponsible to continue expanding charters without understanding how this dual system affects district finances, infrastructure, and the education of our highest-need students.

Finally, I strongly urge you to **reject H7615**, which proposes creating all-charter school districts. This bill would remove democratic oversight structures such as elected school committees and replace them with systems that are far less accountable to the public. Rhode Island already has **64 Local Education Agencies serving only eight cities and 31 towns**. Creating charter-only districts would add even more fragmentation, bureaucracy, and reduced accountability.

Our public schools are the backbone of our communities. They are designed to serve every child who walks through their doors. Policies that divert resources, weaken accountability, and create separate systems of education threaten that mission.

I respectfully ask this committee to **support H7415 and HJR8131 and reject H7615** in order to protect equitable, transparent, and sustainable public education in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mildred Marzan-Gallop
Teacher, Providence School District
Providence, Rhode Island Resident