

To the Rhode Island House Committee on Education,

Bill #7415

I am writing as a public school educator in Providence to urge you to take a serious and critical look at the continued expansion of charter schools in our city. While charter schools are often presented as additional options, their growth has very real consequences for the students and educators in Providence Public Schools.

Every time a charter school expands, funding is pulled directly from our neighborhood public schools. When that funding leaves, it is not an abstract budget adjustment—it immediately impacts the resources available to the students who remain in our classrooms. Less funding means fewer materials, fewer programs, and fewer opportunities for the children we serve.

As more and more charter schools move into our communities, they also take over buildings that once served public school students. These buildings are public assets that should remain dedicated to strengthening our public school system. When charters move in, they often occupy space that could otherwise be used to expand services, reduce overcrowding, or support specialized programming within the public system.

The financial impact is even more significant when you consider the services our students rely on every day. When funding leaves with charter expansion, our district has less money to provide the support that many of our students need to succeed. That includes educators, counselors, occupational therapists, speech therapists, social workers, and other essential professionals. These services are not optional—they are critical to meeting the needs of our diverse student population.

The students who remain in Providence Public Schools deserve fully funded classrooms and access to the supports that help them learn and thrive. Continued charter expansion strains an already under-resourced system and makes it increasingly difficult to provide those supports.

I urge the House Committee on Education to consider the long-term impact that charter expansion has on the stability and funding of Providence's public schools. Our public education system should be strengthened and invested in, not gradually depleted.

Please prioritize policies that protect and invest in our neighborhood public schools and ensure that public funds remain focused on serving the majority of students in Providence.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the students of Rhode Island.

Respectfully,

Shannon O'Connell
Special Educator at Anthony Carnevale Elementary School
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