

Dear Honorable Members of the House Education Committee,

I write to you today to ask you to address the crisis that has erupted across the State of Rhode Island and has the potential to cause lasting harm and long-term financial impacts on all of our communities and generations of Rhode Islanders.

Vote to support H7414 - a moratorium on charter schools, and H8131 - which would establish a legislative commission to study Rhode Island's charter school funding formula and provide recommendations for a more sustainable and equitable system.

Billionaire backed charter corporations have been allowed to spread and grow in our state with little to no regulation or transparency. These bills will stop additional harm and help to stop the devastating impact on our towns and communities.

Because of the expansion of corporate charters, we now have 64 independent school districts in our state.

Charter corporations have taken over, systematically siphoning as much money as possible out of our communities. In a state with 39 municipalities, we have 64 independent school districts, 64 superintendents, 64 curriculum departments, 64 transportation plans, leaving the municipalities with no choice but to raise property taxes in order to pay for the increased cost of trying to support multiple school districts, and the additional administrative and overhead costs.

Voting against the moratorium, H7414 is a vote to increase the taxes of every Rhode Islander.

Because of corporate charters, we have spent the last decades increasing the cost of education in exchange for worsening student outcomes. The taking of critical funding from all of our districts has resulted in painful cuts to teachers, programs, athletics, activities, and student support services. And for no measurable benefit. Statistically charters fare no better, and often worse, than their public school counterparts. And worse, we have no true accountability for how those dollars are spent. Year after year we watch precious Rhode Island taxpayer dollars, designated for our children, be sent to billionaire backed corporate offices out of state with little to no public accountability.

H8131 would demand corporate charters adhere to the same standards as every other agency that receives public funds. Transparency. Why are they fighting transparency if they are actually spending Rhode Island dollars on educating Rhode Island students?

Please give this matter the time and attention it needs. Pause the expansion and demand accountability so that we can truly evaluate the cost and benefit of corporate charters on our kids and communities.

Thank you for your time, and consideration.

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