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**Sent:** Monday, March 9, 2026 9:06 AM  
**To:** House Education Committee  
**Subject:** Support for Rhode Island Public Schools

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## Testimony in Support of **H 7415 – Charter Moratorium / Cap Reduction** and **H 8131 – Commission to Study Charter Funding and Costs**

### Introduction

Rhode Island's public schools are the heart of our communities. They serve every child, welcome every family, and remain accountable to taxpayers, educators, and local residents. The continued expansion of charter schools threatens the stability, funding, and long-term health of our public education system. The following testimony outlines the urgent need to support H 7415 and H 8131.

### H 7415 – Charter Moratorium / Cap Reduction

#### Protecting Public School Resources

- Pawtucket was required to send **over \$7.5 million** in FY 2023 as “tuition to other publics,” nearly identical to the **\$8 million deficit** the district now faces. This deficit will lead to layoffs, school closures, and reduced services for students.
- Rhode Island effectively operates **64 independent public school districts** due to charter expansion—each with its own superintendent, central office, and curriculum. This duplication of systems is financially unsustainable and diverts resources away from students.
- Public school districts are already strained by transportation requirements. LEAs must provide busing to charter schools, forcing many communities to scale back busing for their own public school students.
- Charter schools do **not** outperform the public schools that fund them. Diverting millions of dollars away from public schools does not improve outcomes for Rhode Island's children.
- After a decade of statewide investment in rebuilding public schools, it is counterproductive to allow charter corporations to target these newly built facilities for takeover.

### H 8131 – Commission to Study Charter Funding and Costs

#### Ensuring Transparency and Accountability

- Charter schools are **not required** to meet the same financial transparency standards as public school districts, despite being funded by Rhode Island taxpayers.
- Many charter management organizations send taxpayer dollars **out of state** to corporate offices, with no clear accounting of how funds are used.

- Rhode Islanders deserve to know the true cost of charter expansion. Without transparency, taxpayers cannot be protected from waste, fraud, or corporate misuse of public funds.
- If charter schools have nothing to hide, they should welcome the same accountability measures required of every other public agency.

## Conclusion

Supporting H 7415 and H 8131 is essential to protecting Rhode Island’s public schools, ensuring responsible use of taxpayer dollars, and preserving the stability of our local districts. A moratorium on charter expansion and a comprehensive study of charter funding are necessary steps to safeguard the future of public education in our state.

Public schools serve all students. They deserve the full support, resources, and protection of the state that depends on them.

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