

Hello, My name is Sarah O'Reilly; I am a teacher in Providence Public schools and I am submitting written testimony for a few bills up for consideration. Firstly, I want to write against H7615 All-Charter School Districts. This bill would open the door for a further decrease in democratic systems regulating education as charters are often exempt from RI state education law and, as LEAs, can establish their own governance structure. It is deeply important that people get a say in who sets rules and policy for schools and while this bill would create a system for municipalities to vote on charter systems directly, I think it would essentially be allowing people to vote in systems that take away their democratic power to have a voice in the education of their students. Secondly, I want to voice my support for H 7415 Charter School Moratorium and Cap Reduction. The current legal definitions of charters allow networks of schools to be counted as a singular entity - already taking some of the power away from a charter cap to limit their expansion. Further, there is vast amounts of data demonstrating that these schools don't enroll our highest need students, resulting in higher needs with less funding in traditional public schools. These funding shifts lead to increased inequity and access to education. Without a firmer cap on charter expansion, these inequalities and problems will only continue to grow. Similarly, creating the commission outlined in HJR 8131 Charter School Funding Study Commission would go a long way to help bring transparency to the function of the charter schools in our state. Increasing transparency can help reveal any existing problems with how charter schools are operating and, hopefully, prevent future issues. We need clarity on the fiscal impact of creating two separate public education systems in a time of declining enrollment and federal funding, and truly understanding how this is impacting every facet of education. Thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony. Sincerely, Sarah O'Reilly