

## Lisa Cataldi

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**From:** Aimee Couto <oceanstate192@hotmail.com>  
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**To:** House Education Committee  
**Subject:** testimony in support of the bill HB7907

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Aimée Couto  
Educator, K-5 Instructional Coach  
East Providence School Department

House Education Committee, HB7907

April 2, 2026

Dear Chairmen and Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Aimée Couto and I am an educator, instructional coach, and the 2024 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year. I am writing in strong support of HB7907, which would grant voting rights to the Teacher of the Year and Youth representative on the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

Last year, I had the opportunity to serve on the Council following my year of service as the Teacher of the Year. During that time I was able to participate in discussions, share perspectives as an educator in the classroom and speak to the real impact of discussions being made. However, when it came time to vote, I did not have a voice in the final decisions.

That experience has stayed with me. The Council makes decisions that directly impact educators and students across Rhode Island. While being able to speak is meaningful, not having a vote creates a gap between being heard and being able to truly influence outcomes.

As the Rhode Island Teacher of the Year I was connected to educators across all districts through regular meetings with District Teachers of the Year. That role gave me a unique and statewide perspective on what was happening in classrooms, what teachers are seeing and feeling, and what our students need. Granting voting rights would allow that perspective to not only be shared, but to be part of the decision-making process in a meaningful way.

This is about more than one seat at the table. It is about strengthening the connection between policy and practice. When educators have a voice in both discussion and voting, decisions are more grounded in the realities of classrooms. This would have a positive impact on students.

I respectfully urge you to support HB7907 and ensure that the voice of educators is not only heard but also counted.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Aimée Couto

Sent from my iPad