April 8, 2026

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara, Chair
House Education Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair McNamara and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of House Bill 7414 to end Rhode Island's takeover of Providence Public Schools (PPSD) and return the district to local management effective July 1, 2026. The return of Providence schools to local control is not just an administrative change — it is one of the most important inflection points our city will face in the coming decade.

The state takeover in 2019 followed a deeply troubling assessment of our schools and was intended to reset a system that had failed too many students. That intervention has led to some incremental progress, including long-overdue investments in facilities and modest gains in attendance and academic outcomes.

But the larger promise of the takeover — a full transformation of Providence schools — has not been realized. Families feel more disconnected from decision-making than ever before. Teachers continue to experience substantial instability. And many of the underlying challenges that prompted the takeover remain unresolved.

The state takeover bought Providence time. It did not solve the problem.

That is why this transition matters so deeply. Returning to local control is about more than governance — it is about reestablishing ownership, accountability, and trust. Local control means that families will know who is responsible when challenges persist. It means decisions about our schools can better reflect the realities of our diverse community. And it creates the conditions for stronger collaboration between educators, families, and city leadership — all of which are essential for sustained improvement.

For me, this issue is personal. My husband teaches second grade at Pleasant View Elementary, and we have chosen to build our life in Providence because we believe in the promise of this city and its public schools. Like so many families, we want schools that are stable, responsive, and capable of preparing every student to succeed.

Strong public schools are not only essential for students — they are foundational to the future of Providence. They shape whether families choose to stay, whether businesses choose to invest, and whether our city can grow and thrive.

Providence is ready to take back responsibility for its schools — and must do so with clarity, accountability, and a commitment to getting this right.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass House Bill 7414 and support the return of Providence Public Schools to local management.

Thank you for your consideration.

Onward,

Matt McDermott
Providence, Rhode Island Resident