

The Honorable Joseph McNamara
Chairman, House Committee on Education
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H7271 – Protecting UCAP Students

Dear Chairman McNamara and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alexander Desjardin, and I am the Principal of the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP).

I write to express my strong support for H7271, legislation that will ensure UCAP can continue serving the students who depend on it.

For more than 37 years, UCAP has provided accelerated, personalized education to students who have struggled in traditional school settings. The students who come to UCAP are often multiple grade levels behind, chronically disengaged, or facing significant academic and social-emotional challenges. UCAP was built specifically to meet those needs.

In my six years at UCAP, I have worked with countless students and families who came to us after struggling in larger, traditional environments. At UCAP, they find a different kind of school—one that prioritizes relationships, individualized support, and a strong sense of belonging. As a result, we see students improve their attendance, regain academic confidence, and begin to see a path forward.

You may hear claims that UCAP is underperforming. Those claims are based on comparisons that do not reflect the students we serve. UCAP students are not comparable to the general student population. When you look at growth, engagement, and reengagement, the picture is very different. Students who were previously truant are attending school. Students who were disengaged are participating. Many are making meaningful academic gains in a short period of time.

You may also hear that UCAP is not compliant with special education requirements. That is not factual. UCAP recently completed a special education audit, and the findings were limited to very minor documentation issues that were already corrected. There were no systemic compliance concerns. Our team is committed to meeting both the academic and social-emotional needs of our students within all legal requirements.

UCAP is not the right placement for every student, and no school is. In some cases, students transition to placements that better meet their needs. That is part of ensuring that each student is in the appropriate educational environment.

H7271 is about ensuring that UCAP can continue to exist as an option for the students who need it. It is about protecting students from being forced out of a program where they are finally experiencing success.

I respectfully urge you to support H7271 and the students who rely on UCAP. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alexander Desjardin
Principal
The UCAP School

Verbal Testimony – Alex

Chairman McNamara and members of the Committee, thank you.

My name is Alex Desjardin, and I am the Principal of UCAP.

The students who come to UCAP are not typical students. They are often behind academically, disengaged, or struggling with attendance and belonging. They come to us because traditional settings were not working.

At UCAP, we provide a different environment—smaller classes, strong relationships, and targeted academic and social-emotional support. And we see results. Students who were truant begin attending school. Students who were disengaged start participating. Many make meaningful academic progress in a short period of time.

You may hear that UCAP is underperforming. Those comparisons are not based on similar student populations. When you look at growth and reengagement, UCAP is helping students get back on track.

You may also hear concerns about compliance. UCAP recently completed a special education audit with only minor, corrected findings—no systemic issues.

UCAP is not meant to serve every student. But for the students we do serve, it is often the place where they finally succeed.

H7271 ensures we can continue providing that opportunity.

I respectfully ask for your support.