

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alexander Desjardin, and I serve as the principal at the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP).

For more than 37 years, UCAP has provided accelerated, personalized education to students who have struggled in traditional settings. Our students often require intensive academic and social-emotional support, and UCAP was built specifically to meet those needs.

When looking for a school community to be able to build strong relationships and give students a chance to grow into themselves as young adults. The UCAP School gives just that. Over my last 6 years, I have had the pleasure to work with so many students and families, who were struggling for multiple reasons: bigger school, below grade level, attendance, bullying, and lack of motivation, to name a few. When students start at UCAP, we can give them a unique experience that thrives in social/emotional learning, resources for families, academic interventions, extended time, meeting students' needs, and giving them a community to be themselves in. I have countless experiences with community members, families, and students who continue to thank the community for giving the support needed to have students gain their academic motivation, strive to get into a good high school, build stamina to attend school daily, and truly gain life skills to be their best versions. So many students and community members come and visit the school and share the unique success stories they have had over the last 37 years. These experiences are bigger than any budget or reasoning to no longer have the doors open to continue making a difference in the lives of students daily. Our Beyond U program gives our community and students a chance to create opportunities and experiences that families would not be able to provide without our program. Events, trips, cooking, rock climbing, Save the Bay, Washington DC, and Nature's Classroom.

The UCAP School is not your typical school model; we are so much more than an educational setting. We go above and beyond to make sure everyone has the best possible educational experience.

S-2208 / H-7271 would modernize UCAP's statutory framework and allow additional districts to refer students. This ensures that access to UCAP is based on student need.

Our students deserve continuity and stability. I urge you to support this legislation to protect a proven public education model that has served Rhode Island students for decades.

Sincerely,
Alexander Desjardin, Principal
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