

March 12, 2026

Re: Support for S-2208 / H-7271: Ensuring Stability for UCAP Students

Dear Chair and Members of the Education Committee,

Since 2022, I have had the pleasure of working at the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP) where I teach literacy support classes, coordinate the library and community speaker program, and lead a student advisory. As a middle-school educator with 21 years of professional experience in Providence, Central Falls, New Bedford, and abroad, I have seen a lot. I urge you to support S-2208 and H-7271 to ensure UCAP's continuity and governance update.

When the news broke that Providence Public Schools elected to withdraw from the Collaborative for next year, jeopardizing UCAP's ability to serve our youth, our community was devastated. Several of my colleagues cried. Students looked at me with great confusion, concern, and knitted brows. They shared comments like, "But I *learn* better *here* than I did at my old school," and "I am *not* going back to [my old school]." Staff, students, and families have all made a conscious choice to be here, and the possibility that we will not keep teaching and learning together is deeply unsettling.

What I have learned over my multi-decade career in education is that ***no one school is the right fit for every learner or every teacher***. While large, traditional middle schools may be effective for some, the data and history show us that they do not work for all. UCAP exists to provide accelerated, personalized education to students who have struggled for a wide variety of reasons in traditional settings. Our students often require intensive academic and social-emotional support, and UCAP was built specifically to meet those needs. We provide a small setting for kids and families who are seeking a fresh start and another chance at educational progress. The school was founded 37 years ago as a drop-out intervention, and indeed, we are still impacting lives on profound levels. Routinely, I connect with alumni who come back to visit the school, as well as in the wider community. It is not uncommon for me to hear, "I loved UCAP! That place is so important to me!" as well as, "I was so bad in middle school! I am so lucky I got to grow up a little at UCAP and get myself together!"

Under Lynn Prentiss's leadership, the school has made necessary improvements in key metrics, resulting in a jump in our state "star rating." As a professional, I feel both highly respected and pushed to deliver my best each day. We have a beautifully maintained facility that costs the city and the state nothing outside the ordinary. We have a built-in afterschool program that is free and available to every student. UCAP has great positive momentum at this time.

In front of you is an opportunity to update the statutory framework of UCAP so that it may continue to serve Rhode Island's youth who need it most, across multiple districts. Our learners deserve continuity and stability. I urge you to vote S-2208 / H-7271 to the floor for passage.

Respectfully,



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