

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Bonnie DeBlois, and I am on the Fund for UCAP Board and the wife of the founder and past director of UCAP, Rob DeBlois.

UCAP was founded by Rob in 1989, long before alternative education models were available in Rhode Island. The mission of the school is to serve urban students who face challenges both in their everyday lives, and in school. UCAP is designed to help middle school students who have fallen behind catch up to their peers, and graduate from high school on time.

Because of its many unique attributes, UCAP has had extraordinary success over the years. Thousands of students who were likely to drop out of school have graduated from high school, or attained their GED. UCAP students not only enjoy small class sizes and individualized instruction with the opportunity of acceleration in grade, but they also enjoy a welcoming, supportive community with offerings of after school, weekend and summer experiences. These are experiences like sailing, swimming, skiing, hiking, camping, cooking, and trips to Washington DC and New York city, that many have never experienced before. When speaking about UCAP, students, staff, alumni, and supporters always mention "community" as an outstanding feature which is often absent for these students in traditional public schools. It is this sense of community which engages students, thereby motivating them to realize and then reach their potential both in school and in life!

S-2208/H-7271 strengthens UCAP's long term sustainability by allowing additional districts to refer students and clarifying governance and admissions authority. This legislation reflects today's educational landscape and ensures that UCAP remains a stable, accountable public option for families across Rhode Island. UCAP is still in many ways unique, offering opportunities to deserving middle school students who have faced many challenges in their young lives - opportunities which are not available to them in traditional public schools.

I respectfully urge your support of this important legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Bonnie DeBlois Fund for UCAP Board Member  
Seekonk, MA