

212 Indian Trail
Saunderstown, RI 02874

March 9, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Catalina Martinez, and I am writing as a former employee and long-term supporter of the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP).

UCAP was founded in 1989, long before alternative education models were widely available in Rhode Island, and for 37 years, it has served students who need accelerated learning and a smaller, structured environment. My personal connection to the school began when I was initially hired by Rob DeBlois as his personal attendant in 1989 to help care for his needs as a quadriplegic, and to otherwise help him start the school. As a high school dropout from Providence myself, I was the perfect fit to meet with the parents and provide context for the needs of the students. I spent five of the most important years of my life helping to get UCAP off the ground. Once the school found a permanent home in Providence, and with the love and support of Rob and the broader UCAP community, I went to college. Along the way to obtaining an undergraduate and three graduate degrees, there were several instances when I was in college with former UCAP students, which was absolutely thrilling. I also had a graduate fellowship at one point that allowed me to give back to UCAP through bringing students out on Narragansett Bay for intensive field programs, which I did for several years. Today, I have a nearly 25-year career as an oceanographer, and my educational journey truly began at UCAP.

The proposed legislation, 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.

I respectfully urge the Chair and Members of the Committee to consider my personal testimony, which speaks to the life-changing impact UCAP has had and continues to have on countless Rhode Island students. By supporting 2208/H-7271, you will not only affirm the decades of successful work by UCAP but also secure its future as a vital educational option. I strongly encourage you to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,
Catalina Martinez
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