

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

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jeff Guillemette], and I served as an English teacher 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.

Twenty years ago, I began my career at UCAP. Our founder, Rob DeBlois, championed a vital mission: providing a second chance to students who had struggled in traditional public schools. We worked tirelessly to build the trust necessary to break through deep-seated barriers to achievement. While the work was emotionally demanding, the rewards were immense; through small classes and structured support, we watched students replace hopelessness with life-altering success.

Rob's vision proved that when a student is truly seen, their potential is limitless. The proof is in our alumni: many of those once-struggling students have since found success as lawyers, medical professionals, military personnel, small business owners, and even teachers, which are outcomes that once seemed unreachable. Closing UCAP would dismantle a proven pathway for those most at risk of falling through the cracks. In an era of unprecedented challenges for our youth, losing this support system doesn't just fail our most vulnerable students, it diminishes our entire community.

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,
Jeff Guillemette
5th grade ELA/SS teacher
Cambridge, VT