

3/20/2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Spencer, and I am a former special education teacher of the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP).

UCAP was founded in 1989, long before alternative education models were widely available in Rhode Island, and has served students who need accelerated learning and a smaller, structured environment for 37 years.

I was fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to be a special education teacher at UCAP from 2002-2005. I left for personal reasons and have been trying to find a place as special as UCAP ever since. The commitment and dedication to giving students a positive school experience where they previously have not felt seen or heard is unmatched in other districts and states. At UCAP, the students grow academically, as expected in a school, but the "magic" happens with their emotional growth. UCAP is more than a school. It is a community where students, and adults, are accepted for who they are and celebrated for their differences. I observed students coming into UCAP for the first time leery of teachers and unable to take risks due to past educational experiences. Then, through their tenure at UCAP, I witnessed young women and men graduate with their shoulders back, head held high, self identifying as students and advocates. I have worked in multiple states and I have never experienced a place as transformative and truly special as UCAP.

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.

I respectfully urge your support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Jessica Spencer
Wolcott, VT