

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

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joe Killilea, and I serve as a 7th grade ELA 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.

This is my 27th year teaching at UCAP, and I feel I have seen the school evolve into an even stronger school year by year. When I started at UCAP, our mission was to help students who had stayed back in previous grades to accelerate their learning and complete more than one grade in a year. These years sometimes felt like we were all rushing to complete grades. Over the next decade, as fewer and fewer students were retained in grade, UCAP's mission changed. We had fewer students who needed to accelerate, but we had many students who had gaps in their learning and who needed individualized attention to catch up in their learning. This mission speaks to me. I value working at a school where the whole staff talks about individual student gaps and how they might close them.

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,
Joe Killilea, 7th grade ELA teacher
Barrington, RI