

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joseph Ortiz , and I serve as the Attendance Support Specialist here 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.

UCAP is important to me because it gives students something every young person deserves, the opportunity to feel heard, valued, and seen. Because the school is small, the relationships between teachers and students, and even between peers, are truly special. Here, people know your name, your strengths, and the goals you are working toward. UCAP is more than just a school; it is a community where students and staff support each other to grow together. The resources, guidance, and encouragement students receive here inspires them to believe in themselves and strive for more. When I have conversations with alums or current students they express how good UCAP has been to them and how they wish they can come back or never leave. As someone who is a part of the staff here it makes me feel like we are having a positive impact.

If I could go back to my middle school years, I would have loved to be part of a place like UCAP. I was a shy kid and a tough learner, and for a long time I felt like the traditional public school system didn't really help me come out of my shell. It wasn't until I went to high school in a different city that I finally realized what I had been missing: a learning environment where students are truly supported and encouraged to grow. That's why I believe UCAP is so important. It provides a foundation for students who are searching for confidence, connection, and opportunity. Programs like this should always exist, because they give students the chance to discover their potential and become the best version of themselves.

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,
Joseph "Jojo" Ortiz
Attendance Support
Providence RI