

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Junissa Hayes, and I serve as a Teaching Partner/In house Substitute 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.

The past three years working at UCAP I've witnessed so much growth on how this school has accommodated and adjusted techniques solely on the needs of the children in this space. I believe that a place that will go beyond and over for a child's education is a really special school. My favorite thing about working at UCAP is the fact that it is a small setting and we really are a family at the end of the day. Everyone knows each other's names and there's at least 1 to 2 people or staff that the kids feel comfortable with when it comes to social-emotional support. The kids feel safe and protected in a setting where they are heard, respected and actions are taken so they can receive their education in peace. The teachers at UCAP really do a phenomenal job at their duties and making sure the children are receiving exceptional education and they are always willing to alter any assignment to meet the needs of every student. Every teacher meeting consists of discussions and strategies on how we could help or improve ways to serve our children at UCAP. In a place like UCAP the goal has always been to put the children first and make sure we are doing everything in our power for them to receive the best education and essentially get them ready for high school and also the real world. I've also been the girls head basketball coach for the past 3 years, in this program the children have really demonstrated leadership, sportsmanship and what it takes to be a student-athlete to the community by upholding their grades first and still being successful on the basketball court. For more than 37 years UCAP has stood as a place where education is taken seriously, memories are cherished, alums always come back to visit and truly just a special school for those that have been able to experience it. I'm hoping that we are able to continue to fulfill the needs of these bright students for many years to come.

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,  
Junissa Hayes, Teaching Partner/In house Substitute  
Providence, RI