

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Thomas V. Stepka, and I serve as a former educator 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.

I worked with many needy students who needed extra help in reading. Students who came to UCAP were reading significantly below grade level. I bonded with many of these students. One even asked if he could live with me. I still keep in contact with some former students. I have watched them mature into adults. This is the result of their UCAP education and their relationship with the UCAP staff.

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,  
Thomas V. Stepka  
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