

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island House of Representatives
The Honorable Jacob Bissaillon
Chair, Senate Committee on Housing and Municipal Government
Rhode Island Senate

Dear Chairman Abney and Chairman Bissaillon:

We, the Central Falls Teachers Union, Local 1957 write to strongly endorse the passage of House Bill 6255 and Senate Bill 1063, which would both restore local governance of the Central Falls School District and ensure the sustainability and predictability of district funding. This legislation finally gives the people of Central Falls—families, educators, and local leaders—a voice in the future of their schools.

As a union of professionals, the CFTU worked with local leaders to present the needs our community faces for successful and responsive public education. The community advisory board reached a strong consensus, recommending a 9-member hybrid School Board (5 appointed and 4 elected members). The passage of these bills will empower those who know the students and community best. Local control means accountability, transparency, and a direct investment in children's success.

These bills also make good on the state's intentions for the Central Falls Stabilization Fund, ensuring predictable, proper, and transparent funding for all the students of Central Falls. The CFTU has been drastically impacted over the years as our faculty numbers have decreased each year due to funding. This has resulted in larger class sizes, decreased resources all while the demands have increased year after year. Not only have students been impacted academically by the uncertainty of funding, but they have also been impacted social and emotionally. At a time when mental health supports have been needed the most, our community has lacked the ability to fully support in these areas without stable funding.

These bills leverage the community's local assets to bring revenue to the school district, directing that any state Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) revenues from the Wyatt Detention Facility—currently the only detention center in Rhode Island excluded from the PILOT program—be used to support the Stabilization Fund, all without adding costs to the state. This creative solution will provide the city time it needs to take control of the schools and identify financial efficiency opportunities and address financial concerns.

The time is now to return the voice of public education back to the community that CFTU humbly serves each day. House Bill 6255 and Senate Bill 1063 ensure that families, educators, and local leaders shape the future of the city's schools, while also providing a financially responsible path forward. The CFTU looks forward to being an integral partner in the work ahead.

Respectfully submitted,
Central Falls Teachers Union, Local 1957