

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island House of Representatives

The Honorable Jacob Bissailon
Chair, Senate Committee on Housing and Municipal Government
Rhode Island Senate

Dear Chairman Abney, Chairman Bissailo, and Committee members:

My name is Thomas Evans, and I write in strong support of House Bill 6255 and Senate Bill 1063. I am a proud alumnus of the Central Falls Warriors (class of 2005), having attended Central Falls public schools from kindergarten through high school. During my time at CF High School, I was honored to serve as a student-athlete, class president and, yes, Prom King. I then moved on and graduated with a bachelor's from URI and am now currently enrolled at Salve Regina University, completing my master's degree. I stand here as a proud Central Falls product.

Today, I remain deeply connected to the community, with my four-year-old child currently enrolled in the Central Falls School District, and my 10-year-old daughter attending BVP. I am also the founder and president of Central Falls Youth Baseball, a free nonprofit organization that proudly serves over 150 families, for the last five years providing youth development opportunities through the sport of baseball, mentorship, and community engagement. I also currently serve on the Central Falls School District Board of Trustees.

As a member of the Central Falls community, and speaking as a parent, I believe the time has come to return full control of our school department to the city. While the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) initially intervened in 1991 with the intention of providing stability and oversight, it is increasingly clear that sustained state control has limited the ability of our community to address the unique challenges and aspirations of our students.

Central Falls is a diverse and resilient city. Our students, including my own children, are multilingual, multicultural, and full of potential. Yet, the current structure governed by a state agency rather than local leadership has distanced families, educators, and stakeholders from the decisions that most directly affect their children's education.

Local control would restore a vital sense of accountability, responsiveness, and trust. Decisions made by those who live, work and or are a part of the Central Falls community as volunteers or alumni are more likely to reflect the realities of our classrooms and the needs of our families. Our educators and school leaders, deeply rooted in the community, are ready to design culturally responsive strategies, prioritize student well-being, and implement innovative practices that are too often lost in the bureaucracy of state governance.

Furthermore, the absence of local governance has weakened engagement. Parents, students, and community members deserve a voice in shaping the future of our schools. Re-establishing

a local school board under municipal oversight would empower residents, foster collaboration, and help build an educational environment where every child can thrive.

It is to my belief that Central Falls calls on RIDE and state officials to begin a structured, transparent transition process that restores decision-making authority to Central Falls. Our community is ready and best positioned to lead its schools forward.

Thank you.

Thomas M. Evans

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Alumnus of CFHS