



**DONALD R. GREBIEN
MAYOR**



April 27, 2026

The Honorable Chairman Marvin Abney
Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H8204 - Financing agreement for bonding of Slater Middle School construction

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

I write to express my strong support for House Bill 8204, relating to bond funding for Slater Middle School in the City of Pawtucket. This legislation represents a critical step toward addressing urgent facility needs at one of our community's most important educational institutions.

I would like to recognize the efforts of our local partners, including the Pawtucket City Council, the Pawtucket School Committee, and the Pawtucket School Department, for their continued collaboration and commitment to our students, educators, and families. Together, we have worked diligently to raise awareness and pursue solutions to the challenges facing Slater Middle School.

Fifteen years ago, when I was first elected, I inherited a city facing significant financial challenges, including deteriorating school infrastructure and the threat of junk-bond status. Through sustained collaboration and disciplined financial management, Pawtucket has made historic investments in school facilities while achieving and maintaining an A+ bond rating from Fitch Ratings.

Since 2012, Pawtucket voters have approved more than \$600 million in school construction bonds, reflecting a strong and ongoing commitment to education. Following a facilities report, the City completely rebuilt Winters Elementary School and Baldwin Elementary School, while major renovations were made at Potter-Burns Elementary School and Nathaniel Greene Elementary School. In addition, a new, state-of-the-art unified Pawtucket High School is currently under construction and stands as the largest school construction project in Rhode Island history.

As a proud graduate of Slater Middle School, I understand firsthand the concerns being raised by educators, staff, parents, and students. The school is located in an economically disadvantaged community, and conditions at the school clearly demonstrate the need for immediate and meaningful action to ensure a safe, modern, and supportive learning environment.

At the same time, it is essential that we carefully balance these needs with the City's fiscal responsibilities. Last year Pawtucket exceeded the tax levy cap for the first time in its history to meet debt service obligations tied to previously approved school construction bonds. This was a difficult but necessary decision.

Given these realities, we must pursue solutions that address the urgent needs at Slater Middle School without undermining the City's financial stability. Preserving our strong bond rating and avoiding undue burdens on our residents, particularly working and middle-class families remains a top priority.

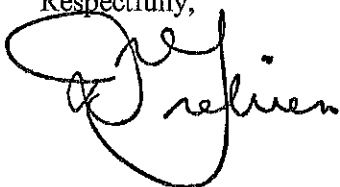
House Bill 8204 offers an opportunity to advance both goals: making critical investments in school infrastructure while maintaining responsible fiscal stewardship. Similar to what was done in other municipalities, the state action would pave the way for a new or renovated Samuel Slater Middle School by issuance of not more than \$22.5 million in city bonds, with the state contributing 85 percent upfront, and the city would then go to the voters to approve its 15 percent of what the cost of what the final bill might be.

Without your support for this legislation, the City of Pawtucket would not be able to address the dire needs at Slater Middle School until 2030. That delay is unacceptable for the students, educators, and families who depend on this school today.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support this legislation and partner with us in delivering safe, equitable, and modern learning environments for Pawtucket students.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Rhode Island's cities and towns.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Grebien". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "D" and a small dot above the "i".

Donald R. Grebien
Mayor, City of Pawtucket