



Center for Youth & Community Leadership in Education (CYCLE)

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April 28, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
Chair, House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma  
Chair, Senate Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**Re: Support for H8429 and S3214 — Return of Central Falls Schools to Local Control**

Dear Chair Abney, Chair DiPalma, and Honorable Members of the House and Senate Finance Committees:

On behalf of the Center for Youth and Community Leadership in Education (CYCLE), I write in strong support of **H8429 and S3214**, legislation that would return the Central Falls School District to local control effective July 1, 2026. This legislation represents a necessary and timely step toward restoring democratic governance, strengthening accountability, and honoring the expertise of the Central Falls community.

For more than three decades, Central Falls has operated under a unique state governance structure. While this structure emerged in response to significant challenges, the community has made meaningful progress and is ready for a responsible transition back to local educational self-governance. Central Falls students, families, educators, and taxpayers deserve a school system that is accountable to the local community it serves.

For the past four years, **CYCLE has worked closely with youth, parents, and school district staff in Central Falls** through the Schools and Communities Organizing for Racial Equity (SCORE) initiative. Through this work, teams of youth and parent leaders conducted original research, identified community-driven education equity priorities, and developed measures to better understand how the school system is performing in these areas. This effort resulted in the **Central Falls SCOREcard**, a community-informed tool that elevates student and family voice and provides actionable insights into district performance.

Throughout this engagement, the Central Falls School District has been a genuine partner. We have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of authentic youth and parent participation in shaping district decision-making. Students and families who reside in Central Falls know what their community needs, and their lived experiences and expertise must be central to decisions about the future of their schools. A return to local control will honor this community expertise and ensure that those most directly impacted by the education system have a meaningful role in governing it.

The **Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study the Return of Central Falls Schools to Local Governance** reached similar conclusions. Its Final Report recognizes the progress that has been made, the broad community support for local governance, and the need for appropriate safeguards, oversight, and a sustainable funding

framework during the transition. H8429 and S3214 reflect this balanced approach by repealing the current statutory governance structure while preserving a continued state-local partnership.

Importantly, the legislation acknowledges the fiscal realities facing Central Falls. Limited municipal capacity makes it essential that the return to local control be accompanied by a **fair, predictable, and sustainable funding framework**, including the Central Falls Stabilization Fund. This approach ensures that responsibility is not shifted without adequate support and that students remain protected during and after the transition.

Local control is fundamentally about **democratic values**. Public education should embody and instill democracy by granting communities the right to govern themselves. Returning Central Falls schools to local governance will strengthen civic engagement, increase transparency, and align educational decision-making with the needs and priorities of the Central Falls community, while maintaining an appropriate role for the State in ensuring equity and adequacy.

For these reasons, CYCLE respectfully urges the House and Senate Finance Committees to support **H8429 and S3214** and advance the return of Central Falls schools to local control by July 1, 2026.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Catone".

**Keith Catone, Ed.D.**

Executive Director