



**RHODE ISLAND  
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND  
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS** AFT  
AFL - CIO

**To:** House Finance Committee  
**From:** Maribeth Calabro, President  
**Date:** April 28, 2026  
**Re:** **Central Falls Governance Transition & Stabilization Funding Reform  
Testimony in Support of H 8429 (Giraldo, et al.)**

Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Maribeth Calabro, and I am here today representing the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP). Having a Field Rep who also served as a member of the Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study the Return of Central Falls Schools to Local Governance, we have witnessed firsthand the extensive work and community dedication that led to this historic moment.

The RIFTHP strongly supports H 8429, which is the essential final piece of legislation needed to return governance of the Central Falls School District to the people of Central Falls.

For over 34 years, the educators and families of Central Falls have operated under state oversight. This bill effectively ends that era by repealing the state-appointed board of trustees and formally establishing the transition to local control on July 1, 2026.

The new nine-member hybrid board, consisting of both elected and appointed members ensures that those with "lived experience," including parents and former educators, finally have a voting seat at the table.

We have fought to ensure that educators and youth are not just consulted but are central to the district's future.

The return to local control cannot succeed without the fiscal stability provided by the Central Falls Stabilization Fund established in this bill.

This fund creates a sustainable "safety net" where the state and city share the costs of education, particularly for high-cost areas like out-of-district special education placements.

Central Falls Mayor Maria Rivera has shown her commitment to the community with a significant investment in the new Central Falls High School. Starting in FY 2027, Central Falls will begin contributing its share to this fund, demonstrating the city's readiness to take on the fiscal responsibility of its own schools.

The bill mandates an enhanced reporting and oversight process with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) for the first two years to ensure transparency and accountability during this critical transition.

Our members, the teachers and staff who serve the children of Central Falls every day, understand that governance is not just about balance sheets. It is about the commitment of a community to its own children. H 8429 honors that commitment by providing the legal and financial framework necessary for a successful return to local control.

We urge the Committee to pass this legislation and help Central Falls reclaim its schools.

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