

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HOUSE BILL 8429 - AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS

Chair Abney and Honorable Committee Members,

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns respectfully submits testimony in strong support of House Bill 8429, which makes important revisions to the governance structure of the Central Falls School District and updates provisions related to the Central Falls Stabilization Fund within the state's education funding framework. The League views this legislation as a thoughtful and balanced step forward that supports students, protects taxpayers, and promotes long-term fiscal and operational stability for the City of Central Falls.

As a proud member of the Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study the Return of Central Falls Schools to Local Governance, I was honored to serve on behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns throughout this important process. From the outset, the Commission's charge was clear and appropriately focused on two central objectives: first, to develop a sustainable financial pathway and timeline for the City of Central Falls to assume and contribute its local share of foundation education aid; and second, to create a comprehensive plan for the orderly transfer of operational and fiscal responsibility back to the local level.

Those two directives went directly to the heart of the challenge before us. This was never simply a governance discussion, it was about building a realistic, responsible, and durable framework that protects students, respects taxpayers, and positions the City for long-term success. The work of the Commission was thoughtful, collaborative, and grounded in the recognition that any transition to local governance had to be accompanied by fiscal sustainability, transparency, and clear accountability measures.

I am confident that this is exactly what we set out to accomplish, and what we successfully achieved. House Bill 8429 reflects the substance of that work by advancing a measured transition, preserving financial stability, and establishing a governance framework designed to support the long-term success of Central Falls schools and the community they serve.

Importantly, House Bill 8429 advances the Commission's recommendation for a sustainable financial pathway by establishing a phased municipal contribution beginning in FY2027, while maintaining shared state support through the Central Falls Stabilization Fund. The legislation also includes a future review timeline to assess the funding framework as the transition progresses, ensuring accountability, predictability, and long-term fiscal sustainability.

With respect to governance, the League recognizes the intent of the legislation to modernize the statutory framework governing the Central Falls School District by repealing § 16-2-34 and aligning the district more closely with current statewide education governance structures. Central Falls has long operated under a unique model, and this bill provides a path toward greater local responsibility while maintaining appropriate oversight and accountability throughout the transition. Clarifying the respective roles of the Commissioner, the Board of Education, and local leadership is essential to ensuring continued educational stability for students and families.

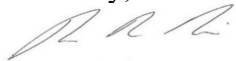
The League also strongly supports the provisions updating the Central Falls Stabilization Fund. These revisions reaffirm the shared responsibility between the state and the City of Central Falls in financing the district, particularly with respect to costs that fall outside the core foundation education aid formula. The bill maintains a predictable funding structure for essential expenses such as transportation, facility-related costs, retiree obligations, tuition for outplaced special education students, and other required placements. These are critical, non-discretionary expenses that require reliable support to ensure continuity of services.

The League further recognizes the importance of maintaining fiscal stability for Central Falls while acknowledging the city's limited local tax capacity. The stabilization framework reflects a balanced and equitable partnership between the state and municipality, ensuring that students are not disadvantaged by structural fiscal constraints beyond the city's control. Continued collaboration between state and local partners will remain essential as this transition moves forward.

In closing, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns supports House Bill 8429 as a responsible and well-considered measure that advances the goals established by the Commission while preserving educational and financial stability for Central Falls.

We respectfully appreciate the opportunity to present our perspective on this important legislation and thank the members of the Committee for their consideration. The League remains committed to working with the General Assembly to strengthen public education systems across all Rhode Island communities.

Sincerely,



Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Finance Committee