



## Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 8581

May 26, 2026

To the Rhode Island House Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Charter Public Schools, I respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 8581.

Rhode Island's education funding system is built on the principle that the per-pupil funding should follow the child. Today, when a student attends a career and technical education program in another district, the full amount of funding follows the child. Yet, charter public schools are subject to a holdback that allows districts to retain a portion of the funding intended for students they no longer educate. As a result, charter public school principals, teachers, and staff are expected to deliver on a promise to provide a high-quality public education with fewer resources.

Last year, Rhode Island took a first step at trying to address this inequity by placing a limit on how much funding (up to 14% of the local share) may be retained. While the existence of the holdback remains unfair, the cap at least provides a way for schools to budget and plan for each academic year. The cap also decreases the likelihood that charter public schools will be subject to holdbacks so high that they are forced to shutter their schools with little notice.

House Bill 8581 would eliminate the 14% limit while continuing to single out charter public schools for a funding holdback unique to the sector. That approach is inequitable. Rather than continuing to target charter public schools, Rhode Island should focus on comprehensive and sustainable school finance reform that fairly supports all public school students.

We respectfully ask that you oppose House Bill 8581. Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to the children and families of Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren K. B. Matlach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren K. B. Matlach  
Deputy Director, Rhode Island League of Charter Public Schools