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Dear Representative Noret,

I am writing to reaffirm my strong support for House Bill 7552 currently under consideration in the Rhode Island General Assembly. As Superintendent of Coventry Public Schools and a lifelong educator, I believe this legislation remains both timely and necessary in addressing the increasingly difficult environment school personnel face when carrying out their responsibilities as public servants.

School leaders and staff across Rhode Island have experienced heightened levels of hostility in public forums and online spaces. While passionate advocacy is an important part of our civic process, the line between disagreement and harassment is too often crossed. School employees are frequently the most visible representatives of their communities, and the intensity of public scrutiny can create an atmosphere that places unnecessary stress on educators and takes a personal toll on the individuals and their families.

My own experience navigating contentious public issues has reinforced how vulnerable school professionals can be to targeted criticism and online misconduct. Social media amplification, impersonation, and coordinated attacks are no longer isolated incidents; they are an emerging occupational reality for many in public education. Even when not overtly threatening, this conduct erodes trust, and distracts from our core mission.

H7552 represents an important commitment to protecting the people who make our schools function every day. By establishing clearer expectations and safeguards, the General Assembly sends a message that respectful engagement with public employees is a shared responsibility. Supporting educators in this way ultimately strengthens our entire school system and the communities it serves.

I appreciate your leadership and continued advocacy on this issue. Your efforts demonstrate a clear understanding of the challenges facing today's school workforce and a commitment to ensuring Rhode Island remains a place where educators can do their work safely and effectively.

Sincerely,

Don E. Cowart II
Superintendent

“Working Together To Improve Our Schools”

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