

Dear Chairperson McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

Please accept this letter as evidence for my strong support for House Bill No. 7552, which seeks to include school superintendents, central office officials, principals, teachers and all school employees within the definition of "public official" regarding criminal threats and extortion.

Our public schools are the incubators of democracy. Unfortunately, the political climate in recent years has placed the professionals who lead, operate and work in schools in harm's way. Educators across the nation and in our state have been subjected to an alarming increase in targeted harassment and threats of violence. This is not meant to silence opposing views, but rather to ensure debate over educational policy remains within bounds.

As a former high school principal, I am adamant that this legislation not apply to students. Handbooks and disciplinary policy guide our responses to students. However, we lack protection against adults who cross the line into threats and intimidation.

Ensuring educators are protected against threats and intimidation by providing a legal recourse will do much to lower the "temperature" that now exists around public education. Public schools and their leaders deserve the protection afforded to other public officials. By expanding the definition of "public official" to include the entirety of the school professional community, Rhode Island takes a proactive stand against the normalization of educator intimidation.

I respectfully urge the House Judiciary Committee to provide a favorable recommendation for HB 7552.

Respectfully,



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Lincoln Public Schools  
Superintendent  
Secretary, RISSA