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Commissioner

State of Rhode Island
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

March 18, 2026

The Honorable Representative Arthur J. Corvese
Chair, Rhode Island House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: House Bill H8248

Chair Corvese and members of the House Labor Committee:

I am writing to respectfully express my firm opposition to House Bill 8248, which would impose prevailing wage and benefit requirements on educators and administrators employed in charter public schools and mayoral academies by adding extensive oversight by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and mandatory data reporting.

I fully support fair compensation for the dedicated teachers and administrators who shape our children's futures. However, this legislation takes a one-size-fits-all approach that directly undermines the core strengths of charter schools—the very flexibility, autonomy, and innovation that enable them to serve Rhode Island students effectively, especially those from underserved communities, who often find greater success in the charter model than in traditional district schools with less financial resources. As established by Rhode Island General Law, charter schools are public schools. As such, we should avoid creating a complex layer of statutes that would differentiate prevailing wage requirements between charter schools and traditional public schools.

The core mission of RIDE is to support Rhode Island's educators in the service of the learning and achievement of Rhode Island's children in our public schools. The work of RIDE centers on advancing academic performance, instructional excellence, and student outcomes across all public schools. This bill would redirect departmental focus and resources toward interpreting and enforcing labor law provisions related to wages and benefits—an area outside RIDE's primary expertise and statutory responsibilities. This shift risks diverting critical capacity away from our essential role in promoting educational quality and innovation, ultimately undermining our ability to best serve students statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. I am available to discuss this further should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Steve Osborn
State Student Opportunity Officer

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Labor Committee
The Honorable Anthony J. DeSimone