



Testimony Opposing H8248

March 18, 2026

To: House Labor Committee

Dear Chair Corvese and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Charter Public Schools, I'm writing to oppose H8248. Charter public schools are required to and already abide by prevailing wage. The Rhode Island Department of Education issued a legal opinion to this effect over two decades ago, which I am including in this testimony.

This legislation would require RIDE to publish only the wages and benefits of charter public schools, excluding district public schools from the same expectation of public disclosure. The League supports transparency, but transparency only works if it is applied equitably. If the goal is increased reporting and visibility into educator compensation, then those standards should be universal. Singling out one sector of public education is inherently unfair and unproductive.

Furthermore, an educator's total compensation package is complex and not easy to compare, with variations in terms of number of school days, length of school day, classes taught, bonuses, flexibilities, paid leave, and other benefits. Requiring RIDE to collect, analyze, and make punitive decisions based on this information would be a distraction rather than a solution.

H8248 also ignores the inequitable and challenging financial situation faced by charter public schools. Unlike districts, charter public schools cannot borrow from tomorrow to pay for today; they are held to a strict accountability framework that monitors debt-to-asset ratio and "days of cash on hand." In addition to being held to higher standards of financial management, charter public schools receive way less funding per pupil.

When a student attends a charter public school, the sending district retains 7-14% of the funds allocated for that student, leaving fewer funds for charter public schools to support instruction and wages and benefits for teachers and staff. As a League, we've spent years asking the General Assembly to fix these deeply rooted financial inequities, but they persist. I want to take a moment to underscore this point. On the one hand, charter public schools are being told they need to deal with operating a public school with significantly fewer resources



than their district peers. They are also told they can't incur the kind of debt that districts are allowed to incur. This legislation would then further penalize charter public schools if they can't afford the same salaries and benefits as their district peers. This may not be the intent of the legislation, but it is the impact.

Despite current inequities, our school leaders and boards work diligently to ensure that they provide educators competitive wages. We believe all educators should be compensated fairly and competitively, and we also know that educators choose where they work based on a variety of factors, not just salary and benefits alone. Our school leaders and boards review compensation annually and work diligently to ensure that they provide educators competitive wages and the flexibility, autonomy, and support educators desire. Our schools have been successful at creating places where educators want to work: An increasing number of charter public schools have veteran educators who have reached the top of the pay scale due to longevity.

Cost of living is up across the board and all public school districts are feeling strain as it works to provide liveable wages and high quality health insurance options to its educators. This is why we support H7974, which would create a commission to study educator healthcare costs. We want to be part of the conversation and solution to challenges facing compensation of all public school educators, but this legislation will not achieve that goal.

For all of these reasons, we oppose H8248.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren K. B. Matlach".

Lauren K. B. Matlach

Deputy Director, Rhode Island League of Charter Public Schools



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

November 12, 2004

Stephen A. Nardelli
Executive Director
Rhode Island League of Charter Schools
235 Promenade Street Suite 600
Providence, RI 02908

Dear Mr. Nardelli:

I am writing in response to your request for an interpretation of the "prevailing wages and benefits" language of the Rhode Island charter schools statute.

Rhode Island General Law 16-77-4(b)(12) states that teachers and administrators in charter schools shall be entitled to "prevailing wages and benefits as enjoyed by other public school teachers and administrators within the school district." With regard to teachers, the Department of Education does not interpret this statement to mean that teachers in a charter school are entitled to the specific wages and benefits set forth in the public school teachers' collective bargaining agreement for the city, town or regional school district in which the charter school is located. Had the General Assembly wished to provide charter school teachers with the same wages and benefits as the local school district's teachers, it would have made direct reference to the local collective bargaining agreement, the instrument that establishes the wages and benefits for the district's teachers.

Instead, the statute refers to "prevailing wages and benefits" of district teachers and administrators. Prevailing wage regulations, which are well established, typically refer to employees who perform a particular job in a particular geographical area. The geographical area consists of the vicinity from which the labor force is drawn. Therefore, in determining the "prevailing wages and benefits" for the teachers and administrators of a Rhode Island charter school, one would look beyond the local city, town or regional school district and survey the wages and benefits for similarly situated employees in the geographical area from which the charter school draws its teachers and administrators.

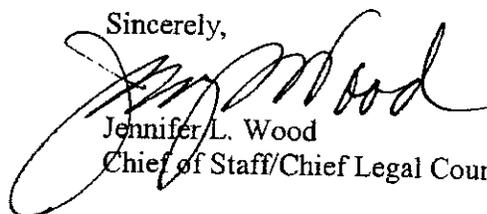
Telephone (401)222-4600 Fax (401)222-6178 TTY 800-745-5555 Voice 800-745-6575

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex,
sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin.

Mr. Stephen A. Nardelli
November 12, 2004
Page 2

I hope this letter is of assistance. Please let me know if you have any additional questions on this subject.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer L. Wood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

Jennifer L. Wood
Chief of Staff/Chief Legal Counsel