



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT
AFL - CIO

To: House Labor Committee
From: Maribeth Calabro, President
Date: March 18, 2026
Re: **Charter School Prevailing Wages**
Testimony in **Support** of 2026 **H 8248** (Representative DeSimone, et. al.)

Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H 8248. On behalf of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, I urge you to advance this important legislation to ensure fairness, equity, and standardization in compensation for educators working in charter public schools.

At its core, H 8248 addresses a fundamental issue: educators performing similar work should be paid a prevailing wage that is fair and consistent, regardless of the type of public school in which they serve. By establishing a system for determining and enforcing prevailing wage and benefit requirements for charter schoolteachers and administrators, this bill promotes equity across our public education system and creates a mechanism for abiding by RIGL 37-13

Too often, disparities in compensation create inequitable working conditions and undermine the stability of the educator workforce. When charter school educators are paid less or receive fewer benefits than their counterparts in traditional public schools, it not only affects recruitment and retention, but also sends a troubling message about the value of their work. H 8248 takes a meaningful step toward correcting these imbalances by requiring the Department of Education to annually determine and publish prevailing wage and benefit rates.

Equally important is the bill's emphasis on transparency and accountability. By requiring charter schools to submit compensation data and authorizing the Department to investigate complaints, conduct audits, and issue corrective orders, H 8248 ensures that standards are not merely aspirational, but enforceable. The inclusion of restitution for unpaid wages and appropriate civil penalties reinforces the seriousness of compliance and protects educators from exploitation.

Standardization is another key strength of this legislation. Establishing clear, consistent expectations for compensation across charter schools helps eliminate ambiguity and promotes a level playing field. This consistency benefits not only educators, but also students, by supporting a more stable and experienced workforce.

Finally, incorporating compliance into charter renewal and funding decisions is a prudent and necessary measure. Public funds must adhere to responsible practices, and this provision ensures that charter schools and Mayoral Academies are accountable to meet their obligations to their employees and the letter of the law.

In summary, H 8248 advances fairness by ensuring educators are paid at the prevailing wage rate in accordance with established RIGL 37-13, promotes equity by addressing systemic disparities, and establishes standardization through clear and enforceable guidelines. It is a thoughtful and balanced approach to strengthening our public education system.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support H 8248.

Thank you for your consideration.

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